

The
Chorus of Life

MURDOCH MACKINNON

Library of The Theological Seminary

PRINCETON • NEW JERSEY



PRESENTED BY

The Estate of the
Rev. John B. Wiedinger

BX 9882 .M3 1930
MacKinnon, Murdoch, 1871-
The chorus of life

11/30

Dec
21
7-1

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

BY
MURDOCH MACKINNON, M.A., D.D.

MINISTER OF RUNNYMEDE UNITED CHURCH, TORONTO

AUTHOR OF "THE IMPRISONED SPLENDOR," ETC.



NASHVILLE, TENN.
COKEBURY PRESS
1930

COPYRIGHT, 1930
BY
LAMAR & WHITMORE

Printed in the United States of America by the COKESBURY PRESS
Published in coöperation with the Ryerson Press
of Toronto, Ontario, Canada

FOREWORD

A FEW of the articles and sermons contained in this volume were published in various religious journals such as *The Christian World Pulpit*, *The British Weekly*, *The Homiletic Review*, *The Expositor*, *The Methodist Review*, *The Presbyterian*, *The Christian Advocate*, *The New Outlook*, and *The Canadian Journal of Religious Thought*. The encouragement of the editors of these publications and their courtesy in permitting this further use of this material is hereby very cordially acknowledged. Most of it, however, has not hitherto appeared in print, and in response to the request of friends who have heard these sermons or have read the articles that were published, it is offered in this more permanent form. The demands of a large congregation make it difficult for the minister of to-day to put in proper literary form the thoughts that come to him. The hope is cherished, however, that what has been of value to the few may prove of service to a wider reading constituency.

TORONTO.

MURDOCH MACKINNON.

CONTENTS

PART I

CHAPTER	HARMONIES	PAGE
I.	SPIRITUAL ENTERPRISE.....	11
II.	FACETS OF FAITH.....	19
III.	THE CALL TO THE HEROIC.....	29
IV.	SESAME AND LILIES.....	40
V.	THE MAJESTY OF SELF-CONTROL.....	53
VI.	THE GIFT OF PATIENCE.....	66
VII.	THE CONDUCT OF LIFE.....	79
VIII.	THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD.....	89
IX.	THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.....	107

PART II

ANTIPHONALS

X.	FLOWERS OF THE HEART.....	121
XI.	THE SOUL'S AWAKENING.....	133
XII.	A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY.....	141
XIII.	THE MEETING OF THE STREAMS.....	151
XIV.	HELP.....	158
XV.	THE CONTAGION OF HEALTH.....	169
XVI.	THE SIN OF THE SHORT CUT.....	178
XVII.	THE PROBLEM OF PAIN.....	184

PART III

IN MAJOR KEY

XVIII.	VICTORY IN THE MAKING.....	193
XIX.	VISION AND THE IDEAL.....	207
XX.	THE CULTIVATION OF THE INNER LIFE.....	215
XXI.	WONDER AND WORSHIP.....	227
XXII.	WHEN THE MORNING STARS SANG TOGETHER.....	239
XXIII.	THE ROSE OF THE PLAIN.....	252
XXIV.	THE QUEST.....	259

PART I
HARMONIES

I

SPIRITUAL ENTERPRISE

"Adding on your part all diligence." (2 Peter 1: 5.)

"THE soul of religion is the practick part." So Bunyan, our Puritan saint, declares. Faith is illumination plus character. "Spiritual enterprise" puts the emphasis on the *plus*. Religion divorced from life is a form devoid of content. To relate religion to life calls for the utmost earnestness.

How frequently we think of religion as *subtraction*; something that robs us of this enjoyment or deprives us of that opportunity; something which has forever as its motto "Touch not, taste not, handle not." Religion is in reality not subtraction, but *addition*—seeking first a kingdom in the confidence that all necessary things shall be *added*; faith in the all-sufficiency of the righteousness of God and, on our part, *adding* all diligence that we may realize his righteousness in character and service. Diligence is the modest, homely virtue that makes this addition possible.

Diligence is not copyrighted. The merchant looks for an increased volume of business, but he invites prosperity by giving careful attention to details, and by all skill and ingenuity known to him. "Don't spend all your time with me," said the proprietor of a large store to the young men of promise in his employ.

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

"Learn all I can teach you, but better yourselves when you can." They did. They went to school in the subordinate place and qualified for the higher positions awaiting those who can do things just a little better. Are you keeping pace with the general development of your business or your country? Some one else may have to take over your position unless you are diligent in business and fervent in spirit.

Willingness to work is still looked upon as a virtue. There are men and women who still give conscientious service. But the great danger to which our Christian civilization is exposed to-day is the studied art of indolence on the part of the selfsame people who frequently clamor for increased wages. We are all, I hope, in sympathy with the highest wages commensurate with ability and reasonable returns, but no fair-minded man is in sympathy with him whose chief concern is with his wages and not with the quality and quantity of his work. The serious thing here is not the waste of time and money, but the moral damage to the man himself. The manner in which we do our work, the degree of faithfulness with which we discharge our obligations, is the measure of the life we are making! The quality of our service to-day will be reflected in our countenance to-morrow.

What devotion and industry writers like Ruskin and Tennyson brought to their work. One has but to see the facsimile of a paragraph of Ruskin's, or to read the finished product with a critical eye, to realize

HARMONIES

this and to see how every word is weighed, every phrase placed to advantage; how every sentence is so related to every other that the whole paragraph holds together as an organic thing. Some of Ruskin's Biblical quotations—and few men ever quoted the Bible with greater effect—are anticipated in some instances a score of sentences before they actually appear. I wonder how much time Tennyson put on his "Crossing the Bar"? A very few minutes I understand—the result of the discipline of a lifetime as well as the inspiration of the moment. It is not a matter of chance, nor is it the result of poetic inspiration alone, that the unique word is there and in its place, that the play of vowels and consonants is so delicately and beautifully done that the imagery of the poem is summoned before us by the very sound of the words employed.

When Stevenson concluded that writing was to be his vocation, he gave himself assiduously to the discipline of mastering his art. He read the dictionary, studied words, weighed them, noted their finer shades of meaning; he studied style, sentence construction, and as he went along the streets he kept repeating new words which he added to his vocabulary every day. After years of such discipline he began to write, and then he wrote slowly, a few lines or a few pages a day, with the result that his score of volumes form a permanent part of our English classics.

"Diligent. That includes all virtues in it that a student can have." This from Carlyle. But the

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

statement applies generally. Behind every musical achievement there lie years of irksome toil. Here is a young scout practicing his bugle call. He does it anything but well. Still he keeps on and gradually masters the notes, and one day his call sounds forth as from a member of the old guard.

There is no other way. There is no royal road to achievement apart from industry and perseverance. It is not otherwise in the realm of religion. The finer the element in which we work, the more careful must the training be; and the higher up we go in the exercise of our human faculties, the more urgent is it that we bring into full play all the inherent qualities of the soul. The New Testament is emphatic on the point and calls upon Christians to be eager in the task of building up a rich and vigorous religious life. What otherwise is the meaning of sayings like these: "Trade ye herewith till I come." "Look, therefore, carefully how ye walk, buying up the opportunity." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman." "In diligence not slothful." "And we desire that each one of you may show the same diligence unto the fullness of hope, even unto the end: that ye be not sluggish but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises"? These and kindred statements simply mean that the same qualities of industry and enterprise that are necessary in a business or literary or artistic career are equally necessary in the sphere of Christian achievement. Every one must decide for himself the best way in which he can use the means

HARMONIES

that make for the building up of life and character. To think that the finest product of our Christian faith can be realized in a haphazard and desultory manner is to run counter to all the laws of human experience and to court disaster from the start.

What is our method and what definite provision do we make for adding to our faith all those intellectual features, all those moral virtues, and all those spiritual elements which alone enable us to become robust Christians with a well-developed religious life? We must be *alert* and buy up the opportunity for the Lord; we must be prompt and not leave for our successors the doing of that which it is our duty to do; we must be *bold* and not stand back when a moral issue is to be decided: we must have *courage* and be prepared for all the consequences of undertaking great things for God. What a life of venture the miner, the seaman, the airman leads! But the grandest venture of all is the life of faith. We are not worthy of that faith unless we enter with ardor and enthusiasm into the various spiritual enterprises inherent in it. We must have *persistence*. The men who take up a task with avidity to-day and forget about it to-morrow are not needed in the Church. There are too many of them there already. The need is of men whose faith is like a leaven, whose growth is like the seed, and whose enterprise is like that of the merchantman seeking goodly pearls. Such are the characteristics of common diligence that we are to bring into coöperative fellowship with the forces of grace. "Seest thou a man

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."

No life can thrive without nourishment. The Christian life cannot flourish *in vacuo*. Like a tree, it must have its roots set in good soil and its branches waving in a congenial atmosphere. The storm may help, but it must have some warmth and sunlight. Spiritual gifts may become atrophied. Disuse can bring this result about. The soil may dry up. Jesus spoke of a life being "lost." We associate the idea with the future. He did not. He taught that the man who gives his attention to the passing show will lose his life here; that he who puts husks, never meant for God's children, in the place of the bread of life becomes a lost man now. To prevent so overwhelming a tragedy, to prevent spiritual stagnation, to prevent Christians of stunted growth, we are called upon to use every means at our disposal and to draw upon the inexhaustible reservoirs of grace.

Listen to the charge made in the Epistle to the Hebrews against those who regarded themselves as Christians. In effect the writer tells them they cannot understand him or do the work now expected of them, for they have not been growing. "You need to be taught over again the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God and need to be fed with milk and not with solid food. You are babes still and not men full grown." That is our trouble, too. We remain at the baby stage. We are satisfied with the foundation, whereas the challenge of the faith is a

HARMONIES

completed building, a perfected life realized through the higher reaches of Christian experience until we attain unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Remembering the loftiness of the ideal, we can appreciate the urgency of our giving all diligence; knowing the treachery of temptation, we must be ever on the watch; seeing the way is narrow and the gate strait, we must strive to enter in; and realizing that time is passing and that night will fall, we must press on.

How insistent Peter is on the need of this quality of diligence! He refers to it again and again, indicating that he is speaking out of his own experience. He had been timid and followed his master afar off, but the time came when he could face the people with boldness and insist that at all hazards he must obey God rather than men. He was rash in judgment and passionate in temperament, yet it is he who eventually comes to speak of the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. He had been changeable, but with time he comes to qualify for his new name and to stand confidently in the storm. Peter, unstable as water, becomes solid as a rock. Peter, quick as a spark, becomes the very spirit of meekness. Peter, fearful and timid, becomes bold, eager, and aggressive in the service of his Master and in the propagation of the faith. How did it all come about? Through diligence in learning Christ.

We cannot write a paragraph, play an instrument, or learn a trade without the utmost earnestness. Much less can we practice the highest art of all, the art of

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

Christian living. Jesus said, "Follow me," "Come unto me," "Believe in me"; but he also said, "*Learn of me.*" Now, learning to do well comes by practice, and the object of following Christ, believing in him, or coming to him, is to learn of him, to assimilate his spirit, and to take his yoke upon us and to share in his rest. Peter had "learnt Christ" through a life diligently devoted to the service of men in the name and spirit of his Master.

Let us, then, bring all the earnestness we can to bear upon our daily tasks. There are new fields opening up before us, avenues of service we have never traveled, positions of influence and responsibility to which we shall be duly called, but only as we practise this virtue of doing with our might whatsoever our hand finds to do. There are Christian virtues we have never practiced. There are resources in the grace of God which persistent prayer alone can make available for us. There are areas of Christian experience which we have never traversed; the angel of our better self is contending with us, and if the morning's dawn is to find us blessed it can be only through continuance in well-doing. There are promises that are precious and exceeding great, but the spiritual inheritance of which they speak shall become ours as we press our claims. The righteousness of God may be reflected in personal virtues and social relationships, but they shall become our permanent possession as we open our hearts to the Divine Spirit and add on our part all diligence.

II

FACETS OF FAITH

"In your faith." (2 Peter 1: 5-7.)

WHAT a dry subject Faith is! So is a will until you learn that your name is mentioned in it. Then a new interest sets in. Every word, phrase, and codicil in it has some relation to every other, and therefore to you. Its pages suddenly become illumined and surpass in attractiveness the most popular story of the day.

So is it with this question of faith. Taken in the abstract, it has no meaning for us and no relation to what we are pleased to regard as the practical affairs of life. But when we remember that all the precious and exceeding great promises of God are ours through faith, that we and all that concerns us are provided for in his will, it becomes vitally important that we give immediate attention to so urgent and personal a matter.

Indeed, we are facing a fundamental question right here. Faith touches life at every phase. It is at the basis of human society. People live together not because of self-interest (as is said to be the case with the porcupines that draw respectably near one another on a cold winter night), but because they have come to believe in one another. Given an attitude of distrust, the tribe would break up into fragments and the chief

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

be left without his clan; the home would immediately dissolve into isolated units, and men and women would no longer plight their troth to one another; the state would fall asunder like a brick structure where the cement had crumbled to dust; religious institutions would become extinct, for the fellowship made possible by mutual confidence would be wanting; heaven would become sublimated and God dethroned, for man, believing no longer in his brother whom he has seen, would cease to concern himself with God whom he has not seen.

To cease to exercise this basic faculty and to lose its unifying spiritual agency would be to rob us of the moral dynamic that gives effectiveness to individual effort and to degrade man to the level of the brute.

As a matter of fact, faith is never foreign to human nature, it is not something added. Like reason and memory, it is a part of the divine original equipment. It exists outside of Christianity and outside of religion and belongs to man as such. The little child has it in its simplicity, and the faith of childhood forms a part of the ennobling influence of family life.

What a large place, for example, faith fills in our political and business life! Here is a man who invests considerable capital in buildings and equipment. He buys a stock and engages assistance in the confidence that the public will patronize him. Will he find himself mistaken? Here is a banking concern that puts its credit on the market believing that the people will accept it on its face value. Once in a while they are

HARMONIES

deceived, but in general our banking system is a stabilizing influence in our economic system. The popular complaint is that it does not trust the public as the public trust it, and that it serves us least when we need it most. But a twenty-dollar bank note is worth less than half a cent except on faith, and a savings department would be an impossibility but for the same principle. Similarly the strength of a government depends upon public confidence. When popular favor is withdrawn, the reins of government are already passing to other hands. These are reassuring words from Mr. Stanley Baldwin, late Prime Minister of Great Britain: "It is no good trying to cure the world by repeating that pentasyllabic French 'proletariat.' The English language is the richest in the world for monosyllables. There are four words of one syllable each—words of salvation for this country and the whole world—and they are faith, hope, love, and work. No government in this country to-day that has not faith in the people, hope in the future, love for its fellow men, and that will not work and work and work, will bring this country through."

Faith is not opposed to reason, nor is it a blind acceptance of authority. It is a soul awake. It is not responsible for "the sin of credulity" against which the scientist rightly protests. Its business is to open men's eyes, not to shut them. Credulity is its caricature, not its synonym. It illumines reason and quickens imagination, enabling us to make deductions

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

on the grand assumption that the world is rational and will continue to be so.

The Periodic Law said that, in view of the laws operating in chemical elements already known, certain other elements ought also to exist. The scientists, therefore, left blank spaces in their chart to be filled in when these as yet undiscovered elements were found. Since the law was first formulated at least two of these elements have come to be known, and unless there be a flaw somewhere and unless the world be less perfect in its original conception than we think it is, all the elements will finally be known and tabulated.

Faith alone makes general deductions possible, and the scientist must fall back upon it every day. Halley's Comet appeared when it was expected, and unless our faith in the universality of law be discredited it will again appear to our children at the appointed time.

Faith is not opposed to knowledge. The most of our knowledge we have to take for granted. I cannot prove the accuracy of the geography of India or the history of China. If my knowledge is to be limited to what I can see and verify, everything outside my present environment must remain a matter of indifference. The history of the past, the existence of many countries and peoples in the present, and the achievements of the world at large become a part of my common stock of knowledge in so far as I accept it on faith. We can say, therefore, that in the realms of history, science, art, and philosophy, "faith is the

HARMONIES

substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Apparently faith and works must ever go hand in hand, and every worthy enterprise is made possible through their happy coöperation. The building of the Canadian Pacific Railway through the western provinces of Canada in the face of popular opposition was an act of faith. The old-timer who came into this land and in the face of summer drought and winter storms believed in the future possibilities of this country exemplified in his own way the quality of one who endures as seeing the Invisible.

When we think of the men whose names live forever we at once turn to those whose words betrayed their commerce with the unseen. Think of Tolstoy, Pater, Newman, and other modern pilgrims in the region of faith. Think of Habakkuk, who gathered up the ten words of Moses into one—"The just shall live by faith." Think of Paul—"By grace are ye saved through faith." And think of Augustine, Luther, Knox, Calvin, Wesley, and other spiritual heroes who through faith subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness. The conspicuous feature in the life and achievement of each one of them is the power of the spiritual world working in them through faith. The Reformation, the greatest spiritual movement of the Christian era, began with a new emphasis upon this very thought.

"Preach against morality," said a Scottish minister to a young licentiate. It was good advice from his

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

point of view. Complacency is the very antithesis of the self-sacrifice of the gospel, and the contentment of the merely moral man must be disturbed and broken up by the spirit of true religion. There is no opposition, however, between faith and morality. Morality is an empty form until faith supplies it with motive and content. One may give a cup of cold water in his own name or in the name of Christ; one may give alms to be seen of men or to help a brother in distress.

The value of faith is determined by the character of its object. If it be true that the idolater becomes like his idol, it is truer still that a man grows like his ideal. Hence the large place which faith has always had in the religious life. This spiritual faculty, assumed in every other department, is consciously recognized as fundamental in religion. It is the channel through which the grace of God comes into saving relationship to the human soul. It is man's answer to God's favor. Divine mercy cries, "Seek ye my face"; human faith responds, "Thy face, O Lord, will I seek." It declares that God is, and is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him.

God is, therefore, the ultimate object of faith. Our confidence in one another may be misplaced, but our confidence in God, never. His word shall endure. By his spirit he has guided his people through the years, by his mercy he has redeemed them, by his presence he has sanctified them, and by his loving voice he has ever called them to better and higher things.

HARMONIES

The testimony of religious experience is to this effect: "There hath failed me nothing of all that the Lord hath promised."

A minister introduced a woman to a brother minister with the remark, "This is a woman of great faith." "No," she said, "of little faith, but with a great God." Given a great God, even a little faith will give the touch of greatness to our otherwise incomplete and restless lives.

In the Christian religion Jesus Christ becomes the object of our faith, for in him God draws near to us. In him we can see God and live. When New Testament writers speak of "the faith," they often mean the whole body of spiritual truth for which the gospel stands. In the gospel, God's promises take personal form. Here we can see God's faith in man, his regard for him, and his wonderful love for a sinful world. Here, too, we can see Jesus intrusting the proclamation of his message to sinful men in the full assurance that they will carry it to the far places of the earth. "What if they should fail?" the angel Gabriel is supposed to have said once. "I never make provision for failures," was the challenging reply. He betrays his faith in himself and in his power to win all men to his side even when the whole world seemed to have forsaken him. He believed in God, and though for a moment it seemed as if the Father's face had been hidden, it was but for a moment, an eclipse incident to his human experience. He emerged from his experience strong, radiant, and triumphant, and his closing words were those of one

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

whose faith in the Father had been his sustaining strength.

We must rest our case on him. Our faith in ourselves may lead us to develop the positive and enduring qualities of our natures and to devote our energies scrupulously to things that matter. Faith in one another may give greater effectiveness in realizing righteousness and truth in our time, but faith in our common Saviour alone makes for newness of life. Through him we have come to know God as the fountainhead of all our being, the fundamental constant in life's fluctuations, the spiritual reality pervading the world of time and place, the Infinite One by whose light the truth of the finite becomes accessible, the power not ourselves making for righteousness, the all-wise and the all-loving too.

This faith in ourselves, in others, and in God is comprehended under the one supreme act of faith in Jesus Christ, which is the trustful apprehension of God's unspeakable gift, of the mercy which rose over the world like a bright dawn when the Redeemer came. To believe in him is to see that he is the truth and goal toward which our highest life is pointing; to trust him is to know that his confidence in others was not misplaced; to have faith in him is to realize that God communicates himself to men and that the highest revelation of him came to us in his person and passion.

The soul is man's power of scanning the earth, the sea, and the sky, and of assimilating the beauty and truth inherent in them. Faith is the soul in its seeing

HARMONIES

capacity. Character is our noblest building enterprise. Faith is its foundation. The tree of life bears twelve manner of fruits, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Faith is the root of the tree of life.

There are many virtues that adorn the Christian character. They are but so many facets, while faith is the original gem. There are many streams that water life's garden, and there is a river, but faith is the fountainhead. In the Church of Jesus Christ there are many members in one body, while faith is the throbbing heart that sustains and quickens them all. The soul that is in vital contact with God may go on from strength to strength, and perfection alone is its goal, but the great preliminary transaction is an act of faith.

The self-assertion of the individual must be transformed into a recognition of the primary claims of the universal good. Faith alone can bring this change about. Man's outward progress has been in proportion to his alliance with great natural forces which are coming more and more under his domination and sway. His progress in the spiritual realm is due to his alliance with the great unseen forces of grace, the inexhaustible resources of the divine. Faith is the faculty whereby this holy alliance is effected.

Through faith in God we may be rich while we are poor, and strong while apparently weak. Through the consciousness of God's abiding presence we can labor on from day to day and never weary. Through

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

faith in God and in the possibility of knowing him, the philosopher is enabled more and more adequately to solve the problems that confront the human mind. Through faith in the rationality of the world where God forever expresses himself, the scientist discovers nature's inviolable laws and gradually makes them subservient to man's end. Through faith in His self-revealing character, the historian gives his years to the interpretation of God's dealing with men in days gone by. Through faith in the transforming power of the love of God, the minister of religion makes the gospel of Christ his daily theme; in the midst of indifference, ingratitude, and positive hindrances he labors on until the silver chord be loosed and the golden bowl be broken. Through faith in God, men to-day live and love to seek the truth and make it manifest, and in every circumstance and calling of life men and women are not wanting who find faith in the sustaining grace of an ever-present God, their permanent source of strength, comfort, and support. Through faith, mountains have been removed, which to the skeptic and unbelieving would have been absolutely immovable and insurmountable. "Believe in God, believe also in me."

III

THE CALL TO THE HEROIC

"In your faith supply virtue." (2 Peter 1: 5-7.)

IN your faith supply virtue. Faith, that great fundamental faculty, is apparently not enough. No, faith alone is not enough, and it is not alone; it must bring in its train a whole array of Christian virtues.

The thought of its doing this is involved in the word "supply" here used—*χορηγέω*. It is a word with a history. A prominent citizen in a Greek city would on occasion be honored by his being requested to furnish or supply at his own expense the chorus in the Greek play. This thought would naturally arise in the minds of the original readers of this text, because of the associations of the word. (Our very words "choir" and "chorus" are derived from it.) Faith as the chief actor is to be supplied with a chorus of virtues, every one of which makes its contribution toward the enhancement of every other, and together they render the splendid chorus of life.

Faith, therefore, cannot remain alone. It must sally forth into avenues of manly service and into fields of heroic adventure. There are big tasks to be undertaken, and virtue is faith in its work-a-day clothes. There are burdens to be borne, and virtue is faith bending under the load. There are spiritual foes to be

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

faced, and virtue is faith in uniform. The prayer of the Master in our behalf is not that we may be taken out of the way of temptation, but that we may be kept from the evil of yielding. There are ancient foes to be challenged, and faith can make no terms with whatever exalts itself above all that we call God. It cannot remain at home when great issues are at stake. It declares a holy war upon evil. It must emerge in the open fields of human endeavor and contend for all that is right and good. Virtue is the going forth of faith beyond the ramparts to conquer and redeem the world.

This quality is urgently demanded in our Christian life to-day. We associate virtue or valor with war because in its more primitive form it showed itself first of all in battle. But there are battles and battles. To-day the nation may show its virtue by discountenancing and condemning war as a fruitless and futile sport. There is a new spirit dawning upon the world that demands courage in the days of peace. Is it not significant that the man who opposed war in 1914 became Prime Minister of Britain in 1924 and again in 1929? Has anyone suggested that Ramsay MacDonald was lacking in valor? A glance at the steep and thorny way by which he came to occupy his high position, and the quiet heroism with which he has already faced the problems that have baffled the experienced statesmen of Europe for a thousand years, will give the answer. The time is past when courage and heroism are to be associated with so primitive and barbarous an institution as war.

HARMONIES

The opportunity for the exercise of these virtues was never greater than at this hour. Have we escaped persecution and calumny? Our immunity may be due to our failure to demand a more Christian civilization. We believe in God. That is a spiritual relationship of the first importance. How far does this belief determine the course of our daily life? We believe in Jesus Christ. That is the rock against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. How far does this belief affect our relationships to our rivals in the world of business, industry, commerce, and finance? It is possible that our immunity from attack may be due to our reluctance to test the principles of our faith in the fields of human endeavor.

Faith of itself may become anæmic. It develops sinew as it demands expression. We can never appreciate the relevancy and resourcefulness of the religion of Jesus Christ until we have tried it out in the realms of common duty. It is one thing to have a vision of his wonderful life, and quite another to bring the light of his gospel to bear upon our concrete problems. It is one thing to have enthusiasm for his cross, and quite another to bring the principles of the cross into relationship with life's program. When we shall have supplied the virtue of practical application to our faith in him, we shall discover depths in his message and in our own lives not known before. There is more than one conversion in Christian experience. One comes when Christ displaces self at the center of one's life; another when the power and

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

efficacy of his faith have been put to the acid test of experience.

Professor James was concerned with the question of "the moral equivalents of war." Or should we say immoral? Life abounds with opportunities for the display of heroism greater than any war demands. There are private injuries that are never spoken. The face reflects them, but the tongue is mute. Women have been disappointed and men deceived, but they are too valorous to proclaim it. Feelings have been hurt and no reparations made. A stigma attaches to one life because of another's wrong. The moral blunder of one blights the future of another. The moral deformities of one age show in physical deformity in the next. But with uncomplaining spirit and a hopeful heart men and women wrestle with their handicaps, and in the spirit of Jacob they say: "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." In these and other nameless ways the graces of the Christian faith filter down into the detailed relationships of life. The doctor who visits his patients and risks his own health and that of his household; the lawyer who refuses a case rather than compromise his conscience; the statesman who maintains the cause of humanity in spite of the frowns of the multitude and the danger of being turned out of office; the journalist who prefers a diminished circulation to financial subservience to an immoral propaganda and a corrupted public opinion; the judge who sentences an old-time acquaintance with the same even-handed impartiality

HARMONIES

with which he would dispose of an ordinary criminal; the policeman who rushes into a barricaded room to grapple with a madman; the fireman who rescues women and children in the face of falling beams and tumbling walls; the laborer who toils at a work the only joy of which is the comfort and support which he may bring to those dependent upon him; yes, and the widowed mother, suddenly thrown upon her own resources, and who successfully launches her family upon the world—these are some of the many forms that virtue assumes in the complex nonspectacular but real life of to-day.

Jesus emphasizes this thought frequently in his teaching. The devotion he looks for is charged with ethical quality issuing in worthy service. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them." "Ye are my disciples if ye *do* whatsoever I have commanded you." "By their *fruits* ye shall know them." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth* the will of my father which is in heaven."

Jesus was an idealist of the first order, but he believed in ideals being brought to earth. In the last chapter I referred to the suggestion of "preaching against morality." This may be necessary inasmuch as self-complacency is the antithesis of self-sacrifice. But there is another point of view. The religion that does not affect morality is not a vital religion. We have suffered too long from a false conception of religion that limits it to certain days and areas and to a well-

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

defined vocabulary; whereas religion must determine one's whole vocabulary, become the motive behind every form of service, and bring its spiritual quality to bear upon the work of every day. Morality is religion as it issues in conduct, and we have been at fault in putting the emphasis so exclusively upon the excellences of the Christian faith to the detriment of Christian morality, the realm in which alone the world can see and be convinced.

The teaching of Christ will never be appreciated in all its riches by those who do not strive to follow him with what light they have. As we will to do his will we shall know of the doctrine. The fuller knowledge will come with the endeavor after new obedience. Virtue will react on faith. Faith will react on virtue. Each will be strengthened by the presence and support of the other.

We have here a question of deep and practical concern to the Church of to-day. No friend of the Christian institution but feels that there is not all of ardor and robustness of spiritual life that he would desire. Theology may be systematic and profound, and I believe in a sound and progressive theology. Organization may be well-nigh perfect, and I believe in the organization and unity of the Christian forces of the world if the strongholds of evil are to be overthrown. Preaching may be true to the spirit of the original message, and I believe in preaching as the most potent way of placing the living gospel before the people. But there is a lack. With all our theology, organiza-

HARMONIES

tion, and preaching, the world still lies too largely in the grip of individual rivalry and materialistic self-interest. We still inquire, "Am I my brother's keeper?" We still have our class hatreds, our industrial conflicts, our national sins, and our recurring international catastrophes. And why should so severe an indictment be possible to-day? Because we have not required that those professing the Christian faith put it to daily use, nor have we brought the impact of the gospel to bear upon the morality of the group. We have not even made it clear to ourselves that the group, whether it be a political party, a business corporation, or a modern state, has any particular moral obligation. What an implicit condemnation of our Christian teaching it is that nineteen hundred years after Jesus was born, modern states should disclaim responsibility for the practice of Christian virtue beyond their own borders!

We have been too largely satisfied with intellectual consent to our theological propositions and have made only such demands upon life and conduct as would not seriously disturb our people in pursuit of their ancient gods of self-assertion and personal aggrandizement.

It is within the power of the Christian religion to redeem the whole area of human endeavor. When a more persistent effort shall have been made in this direction, the faith will be seen in a new light, and powers now lying dormant within it shall become released, giving added splendor to gifts and graces already known.

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

Look, for example, at the devout group that came together in Jerusalem "for fear of the Jews." Their sense of loss and devotion to a common Master bound them in one fellowship. But the day came when they stepped out into the open and with boldness proclaimed salvation in the name of the Crucified. A new conviction has been borne in upon them. A new power has taken possession of them. Wherever they go they witness to their Lord. Their faith has been quickened, and things are being done. They are driven from city to city, but the effect is to stimulate them to a more heroic effort. They have proved their faith in their own experience, and now they put it to the test in the lives of others. They are already grappling with questions of poverty and wealth, sickness and health, widows and orphans, and in their new enterprise they suddenly come to experience a spiritual dynamic they had not known before. They sought strength in prayer and found it, but it was only when they faced the concrete tasks around them that the inherent moral qualities of the gospel became released and recognized.

The feature calculated to discourage one looking into the situation to-day is the contrast between our teaching and practice. The Church has peace because she has not wrestled with problems that brought persecution in the past. She has not spoken with any note of challenge against evil in high places. She has not demanded with telling force that the business of the world should be done in a Christian way. She

HARMONIES

has little to say in regard to highly concentrated financial and commercial organizations enjoying the protection of our laws as they pursue their normal business of exploiting our people in their ignorance and helplessness. When she does speak, popular clamor too frequently subdues her into silence.

Power is called for, the power to uphold justice in the social order; moral dynamic, that shall lead us to undertake the translation of Christ's message in individual conduct and in social life. When this power enters in, the faith we now profess becomes a new thing, a more visible, active force in the further redemption of the world.

The call of religion to-day is for resolution and action. The men and women who have enlarged our freedom are not those who calculated before they ventured forth how they might, if necessary, retrace their steps. What made them strong was the sense of having committed themselves. They staked their all upon the goal and steadfastly set their faces in its direction.

Here are two characters suffering from irresolution, which Bacon calls "a disease of the mind." I would be inclined to speak of it as a disease of the will. The one is a literary creation, and the other is a real person. Hamlet must avenge his father's death. Justice must be vindicated. But he hesitates, cogitates, balances the pros and cons of the question, and ends by getting nowhere.

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

"And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;
And enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard, their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action."

Here is a man from real life, Henri Frederic Amiel. Richly endowed by nature, he was trained in the schools of Germany when that country had among its teachers the most brilliant minds in the world. His was a life of culture full-orbed. He discoursed on music, painting, literature, philosophy, religion, and life. Much was expected of him. He was a professor of moral philosophy for five years. But he never achieved in any direction. He left behind him his "Journal," a rich treasure as far as it goes, but it gives only a hint of the great intellectual powers that died with him. There was, it is true, an affection of the heart of which his friends were not aware. But his more serious malady was in the will. He could not get himself *to act*. He lacked the essential gift of resolution and drifted out with no positive achievement to his credit. "To love, to dream, to feel, to learn, to understand—all these are possible for me if only I may be dispensed from willing." Again; "Practical life makes me afraid, and yet it attracts me. I have need of it. The ideal poisons for me all imperfect possessions." Or again: "An act is essentially voluntary; therefore I act as little as possible."

There you have in a nutshell the secret of a great failure. "Dispensed from willing," "afraid of life," "unwilling to act," he withstood the daring of his

HARMONIES

own soul. If you cannot attain to the full realization of your faith in a day, you are not, therefore, to hold back altogether. Heaven is not reached by a single bound. There is something radically the matter with the ideal that poisons practical effort. Faith without works is dead. Religion without morality is empty. Morality without religion is blind. Preaching without practice is vain. Creed and conduct are two oars; plying them both, we can make port. Faith and virtue are two wings; using them both, sometime, His good time, we shall arrive.

IV

SESAME AND LILIES

"In your virtue supply knowledge." (2 Peter 1: 5-7.)

I AM not sure that Ruskin ever made it quite clear why he gave this title of "Sesame and Lilies" to his lectures on education and reading. There may be an innocent bit of subterfuge. By arousing curiosity he gets his audience; and, having got them, he proceeds to discuss serious questions concerning literature and the profitable reading of books. His chief concern is with the increase of knowledge and with what the late President Wilson spoke of as the liberation of the vital energies of the soul.

So it is with the author of our text. His aim is essentially the same as Ruskin's. "In your virtue supply knowledge," he says. Faith is to be supplied with virtue. This we have already discussed. In turn virtue is to be supplied with knowledge. This we are to discuss to-day. Life's harmony consists neither in repeating one note nor in playing one instrument. It takes many notes and instruments to achieve it. Creed must voice itself in conduct, and energy must be directed by wisdom.

If we have faith in nothing else, we have faith in knowledge, which enshrines itself, for example, in our institution, the public school. What is the meaning

HARMONIES

of our lavish expenditures on education to-day? It must surely mean our determination to give every child in the land a fair chance at life. It is our way of saying that ignorance is the mother of degradation and that knowledge is the road to moral and social improvement. It is our comment on Plato's utterance, "Better be unborn than untaught, for ignorance is the root of misfortune."

The university throws its doors open to all who can pass the required tests. Until recently these tests were academic and moral. The economic upheaval incident to the war has introduced a new test, the financial one. There is danger that higher education may be too largely confined to those whose financial resources are equal to the test, but whose mental caliber and moral fiber are not superior to those who are thus unfairly handicapped. Any tendency in the direction of separating enlightenment and virtue, thought and conscience, is a menace to the cause of liberty. Anything in our modern life that shuts the poor out of educational privileges shared by the rich is a real danger to our democracy.

Speaking generally, the university, with its stimulating atmosphere and happy friendships, with its teachers endowed with special gifts, and with its magnificent opportunities for higher learning, is still within the reach of every studious, ambitious, and resourceful youth in our country.

There is, besides, the great world of books. When people could afford but a few books they read them

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

with care and came to know their contents. To-day, when there are so many books at reasonable prices, there may be danger of owning rather than knowing them, but there is no excuse for anyone remaining in ignorance. Here, for example, is a set of "The World's Greatest Literature," "The Harvard Classics," "Everyman's Library," and for the younger folks, "The Book of Knowledge." No one can be said to be ignorant who knows any one of these; and while the price has gone up within the last few years, books are still within the reach of most people. History and biography, poetry and fiction, ethical and religious works, the achievements of the past, the dreams and aspirations of the present are available for our inspiration and guidance to-day.

There is so much in newspaper and magazine and second-rate fiction to dissipate moral and intellectual resources that Ruskin's concern for the youth of his time must be doubly accentuated to-day. "She is very fond of reading," a mother says of her young daughter with an air of pardonable pride. But what does she read? The companionship of unwholesome books is not less damaging morally than that of bad men and women. To poison the mind is to contaminate the very springs of life. Parents, solicitous for their children, will have regard to the matter of the quality of the books they read. There is no better investment than a good book. Sir Henry Newbolt is eminently right when he urges as the main ele-

HARMONIES

ment in modern education the study and enjoyment of the great literature that has stood the test of time.

I read recently of a man who engaged a young business woman to equip his new home for him, select the furniture, buy the books, and choose the pictures, not according to the taste of the future occupant, but according to the best judgment of the purchaser!

Knowledge, however, is confined neither to schools and colleges nor to books and libraries. The schools teach us what is already known, and books record for us the experiences of others. With what delight we learn once in a long while that a man or a woman has pushed out beyond the known and has come back to tell what he or she has found! The field of original research is one that should challenge the enterprise and daring of the most brilliant of our youth. It is the widest field of all. The area of our knowledge is clearly defined. The area of the unknown is subject to no preëmptions or staked claims. If it be worth while studying the experiences of others as imperfectly interpreted in books, it must be doubly worth our while so to live that by our own immediate experience our knowledge shall be enlarged. An open mind and an observant eye in the school of practical experience may more than compensate for the absence of technical or academic training.

Knowledge is a friend of the faith. The idolater has faith of a kind, but in proportion as his knowledge grows his faith becomes dissipated. That is because idolatry is essentially false. The Church has nothing

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

to fear from the progress of knowledge. From the beginning it has been the most active agency in promoting education. In the darkness of the Middle Ages it kept the lamp of learning burning. The Reformation is but the religious aspect of that wonderful illumination we speak of as the Renaissance. The revival of learning gave a new impetus to religion. The quickening spirit of religion stimulated the movement making for intellectual enlargement. The great universities of to-day betray their early dependence upon the nurture and fostering care of the Christian institution, the *Alma Mater* of them all.

Christianity has everything to gain by increased knowledge. Ignorance is the great enemy of pure religion. Superstition and superficiality make common cause. The seeming progress of various religious cults since the close of the war is no compliment to our work in the past generation. To meet the gnosticism of an early day, the Church was obliged to define its own doctrine by a more and more carefully articulated theology. Witness the writings of Paul, Augustine, and others. To meet the superstition and fanaticism of to-day the Church must give its people not so much the formularies of past centuries, but a frank and reasoned statement of its teaching in the language of to-day. The Bible must be rescued from the crass conceptions with which it is being surrounded and allowed in its own human and spiritual way to give its message to the people. Crude notions of inspiration and insane methods of interpretation must be con-

HARMONIES

sciously exploded and replaced by spiritual conceptions of Biblical history and literature that will make our people immune to the poisons of every new cult. We are paying the price to-day for our neglect of these matters in the past.

A body of literature that has become for us the infallible rule of faith and conduct must surely be known. Yet there is danger that the youth of to-day in large numbers are growing up in ignorance of this "rule." Preaching must be supplemented by careful, patient teaching, and in this respect the example of the great Teacher himself must be closely followed. He preached to the multitudes, but he taught in an intimate and vital way those who were to continue his work. The teaching of religion must be combined with the preaching of the gospel if the natural and altogether praiseworthy inquiries of youth are to be met. They must be met, not silenced.

Religion and theology are not the same thing. Neither are they in opposition. The one is the tentative, intellectual presentation of the other. There is an inquiring stage in the experience of young people and in the development of a virile people where they must have a reason for the faith that is in them. Theology seeks to provide this reason. Theology is a stumbling-block only when the popular mind becomes unwilling to recognize its tentative character. The religious life is a growing thing and, as such, must find a more and more fitting garment for itself. Theology must expand as the life it interprets develops, but

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

when its tentative positions adopted in one age become a tyrannizing agency over the intellect of the next there is violence all round. The problems and modes of thought of one period are not those of another, and the business of theology is to define the religious life of its day in terms of existing needs and in the light of a progressive revelation. It is the prerogative of religion to summon a man to the full play of his powers—the play, the insight, and the stretch—yet how often the echo of Isaiah's plaint may be overheard against the architects of our theological systems, ancient and modern: "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it"!

When the pagan was shown the poisonous germs floating in the waters of his sacred river he destroyed the microscope. We destroy the germs. The microscope can reveal nothing to injure our faith. It reveals law and life. The telescope can show us nothing to shake our faith; on the contrary, it extends its scope and enriches its content. It will tell of order and light. These are not opposed to faith. They are faith's allies. As we reach after the infinitely small and infinitely large, we are but thinking God's thoughts after him. Behind the law is the Lawmaker, behind the life is the Author of life; and our God is not a God of confusion, but of order.

Which, then, comes first in the order of our experience, knowledge or faith? Can we believe in one whom we do not know? Can we know a person before we

HARMONIES

really believe in him? Does faith presuppose knowledge, or does knowledge presuppose faith? Did Dr. Banting first believe a certain scientific position to be tenable and in this belief proceed with his experiments until he came to know? Did Columbus first believe in the existence of land beyond the Western waters and in due course come to discover this land? Did the disciples first believe in Jesus Christ and in process of the years come to know his unique relationship to the Father? Or did they first of all know him and, having satisfied themselves as to his worth, believe and follow him? What saith the Scriptures?

Simon Peter answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God."

Are we of those who would be on the side of Jesus Christ but must be shown the correctness of this position or that doctrine before we can put our whole trust in him? That is the wrong order. In science and philosophy, faith and obedience is the condition of knowledge. It is not otherwise in the realm of religion.

See how this position is illustrated in the experience of the apostle Paul. He began his magnificent Christian career by asking, "Who art thou, Lord?" but he ended by saying, "I know whom I have believed." He began by trusting Providence, but he ended by saying: "I know that all things work together for good." He began by accepting the sublime postulate of immortality, but he ended by saying: "I know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

We want the assurance first and submission later. Paul made his submission first; certainty and assurance followed in due course.

You can never know Jesus Christ from the study window of a skeptic or from the pedestal of a speculative observer. He would not answer Pilate's question and, approaching him in the same spirit, he will not answer you; but if you are willing to do his will you shall know of the doctrine. His first word to the human heart is not "Know me," but "Follow me." It was after they had been in his school for many months that he ventured the ultimate question, "Whom say ye that I am?" Knowledge comes with experience. We want the knowledge without the experience; whereas we must first walk and talk with him. We must first give him our love and sympathy. The time will come when we shall know fully and when faith shall be lost in sight. But in the meantime the task is clear; let knowledge grow from more to more.

Virtue of itself is not sufficient; in its outreachings it must be directed and guided by knowledge. Valor may become foolhardy. Strength may be dissipated. Zeal may burn itself out to no purpose. Fervor is akin to fever, and it frequently happens that the one passes over into the other. I may get a good drive off the tee, but what is the use when I am a hundred yards out of direction and the ball is lost? I may send a stone careering down the ice, but to what purpose when it

HARMONIES

razes my opponent's stone, leaving it on the button, while my own gallops wildly through the house? More reserve, a better sense of direction, less strength, and more skill would improve my game tremendously both summer and winter.

I can waste a whole day vainly trying to do what a man of skill can do in a few minutes. The engine stops, and to my frantic efforts it makes no response. The expert mechanic sends his itemized bill for his services: "Fifty cents for labor and twenty-five dollars for knowing how." Three good strokes of a hammer did it. Manual labor of itself contributes but little. It is the knowledge and skill combined with labor that give results. I am surprised to find a certain business concern engaging a man to teach the art of shoveling with a view to economy of time and energy. Result, sixty per cent increase in wages and increased profits of \$86,000 in one year.

More skill combined with strength, economy of effort based upon a better understanding—this seems to be the very quality demanded by our text. Virtue is faith in action. But action implies aim. Energy must be directed. Emotion must be under control. Zeal must come under the sway of knowledge. We must work with a definite object in view. We must have the grace to hold back as well as the power to go on. We must use judgment and common sense. We must know our own resources and make such alignment of our forces as will give us the maximum of results. We must know the enemy, his resources,

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

methods, and strongholds, for we wrestle not with flesh and blood. Questions of time and place enter in, and Christian faith will win in its heroic exploits only as it brings skill and sagacity to bear upon the given situation.

Forethought combined with diligence will save us many a step. He who plans his work and works his plan will accomplish more than he who plunges headlong into the field, not knowing the obstacles to be faced or the equipment required.

Peter drew his sword and struck the high priest's servant. That is virtue out of control. "Put up the sword into the sheath." That is the voice of wisdom, for he who resorts to force shall perish by force.

Is it not so that Christian people are generally too innocent and unsuspecting, and thus give the forces of evil the advantage? How frequently we see the enemy shrewdly using the friends of the faith to do their work for them! Take any reform you may think of, from slavery to the liquor traffic, and you will find a considerable body of well-intentioned Christian people arrayed on the side of the enemy of all faith and virtue. How could such a thing happen? It will always happen when faith has not been informed and virtue well directed. It will always happen when the fires of faith have not been illumined by the light of knowledge, and when the forces of virtue have not been coördinated by the judgments of mature wisdom. It will always happen when the wisdom of the serpent is lacking in the harmlessness of the dove.

HARMONIES

I know of nothing more disheartening in the experience of Jesus than the lack of sagacity and insight shown by his followers. They were so easily deluded. There you have Herod and his cunning, Caiaphas and his subtlety, Pilate and his opportunism, able to do with them apparently whatever they desired. Shrewdness and political astuteness enabled them to have their own way with One who looked to his friends for support and too often looked in vain. No wonder that the bitter complaint should have broken from his lips, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

There is no doubt that a better knowledge of ourselves would save us from many a fall. To underestimate what, through faith, we may be able to accomplish is to be lacking in courage; to overestimate it is to be lacking in knowledge. Better knowledge of our fellow men will lead us to make more just judgments and to present our case to them with greater deftness and skill. If it be not true that "to know all is to forgive all," it is true that to know all the circumstances will make our findings more in harmony with the judgments of God. We must reserve judgment in proportion as our knowledge of motives is limited and imperfect.

We must know the conditions in which the Church is to do her work. Is there slackness in making the gospel effective in the social life of to-day? We have not been students of social conditions, and the virtues of the Good Samaritan are not conspicuous. Does the

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

appeal for support of the missionary effort of the Church sound like a call to throw so much "good money" into a sink hole? We have not familiarized ourselves with conditions in our own country which demand our greatest efforts, nor with the wonderfully encouraging results obtained from what efforts have been made in other lands. The lack of knowledge and not the lack of heart may be the explanation of the comparative feebleness of our efforts to-day. Let the people know, and the people will do their duty.

All our strivings must culminate in a fuller knowledge of God. To recognize his hand in daily providence is to realize that in all our undertakings he will not forsake us. To prove him in the experience of daily life is to acquire a knowledge the power of which nothing can take from us.

"Go," said John Knox, the man who made Scotland with its love of learning, "Go, read where I cast my first anchor." Without further explanation his wife read to him as he lay dying: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." He faced many a storm, but the anchor bravely held.

It will hold for us. May we trust him more and serve him better, that we may be filled with a knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God!

V

THE MAJESTY OF SELF-CONTROL

"In your knowledge supply self-control." (2 Peter 1: 5-7.)

POSSESSION is nine points of the law; self-possession is ten points. To rule one's spirit is a greater achievement than to capture a city. All the forces of sin and lawlessness threatening the security of the city are rampant first of all, and most of all, in our own hearts. If we cannot hold these forces in check within the circumscribed area of our own spirits, we cannot hope to do so within the more diversified area of the great city. It is a distinction to be first in the national realm; it is a greater distinction to be supreme in the citadel of one's own soul.

Once in a long time these distinctions coalesce. The name of William Gladstone stands out as that of a great British statesman. A glance around his study will help us to interpret the man. Here is the devotional section, the trysting place of the man of faith; here is the political section, the anteroom to the arena of the man of action; here, too, is the literary section where the classics of ancient and modern times are studied by the man of knowledge. He made a new translation of the Odyssey when he was eighty years of age, and as a side issue sought to put the radical theologians to flight.

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

But more outstanding and exceptional, perhaps, than any of these characteristics is his record as a public man. The sin of the legislator is his want of control in the use of his power. About Gladstone there was not alone his knowledge and courage and abounding Christian faith; there was a largeness of soul and a self-command which prevented his ever resorting to malignant words or vindictive action. In the light of the passing years this may be regarded as the secret of his long and brilliant career, that he refused to prostitute the great powers he possessed to the winning of temporary advantage.

How many lives have been degraded by the dross of moral weakness intermingled with the pure gold of abiding greatness! Even the great heroes of faith cited in the Epistle to the Hebrews have not escaped. Those endowed with rich qualities of head and heart and enjoying whatever advantage position and power could afford might well be regarded as beyond the temptations of ordinary mortals. It is the other way about. Great temptations keep company with great powers. You cannot have a cyclone in a saucer. The higher the summit, the fiercer the gale. The rarer the gift, the more subtle the temptation and the more urgent the need of poise and restraining power.

Recall, for example, some of the heroes of the past and see if this position be not confirmed by their experience. "By faith Noah prepared an ark to the saving of his house by the which he condemned the world and became heir to the righteousness which is by

HARMONIES

faith." Ah, yes, behold the goodness and the severity of God! For he whose faith inherited righteousness and condemned a world was himself condemned by the lads of his household, who discovered in their father a raving idiot, drunken from the effects of the fruits of his vineyard.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." To him it was given to have his name associated with the law that has given its character to all subsequent legislation, yet the restraint he sought in others he was unable himself to provide. For there is not enough sand in all the deserts of the world to conceal permanently the brutal results of Moses' uncontrollable passion. Espying an Egyptian striving with a Hebrew it is but a word and blow with Moses, who has far to go before he can wear the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

The names of Noah and Moses have come down to us as men of faith, and we do them honor. But in their faith they had not always supplied the quality of self-control—with unforgettable moral lapses.

Here is David, the man of action. His courage and skill brought the boastful Philistine low. His prowess speaks of a daring spirit that has captured the imagination of youth wherever the story has been told. But the sacred record is too frank to conceal another side to David's character. There is that "affair of Bathsheba," and, what is far worse, "the matter of Uriah"

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

and the sin that brought David to his knees in penitence and humility. What is Absalom's rebellion if it be not David's sin turning upon his own head, so inexorable are the laws of a morally ordered world. He who subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness and turned to flight the armies of the aliens lost out in the struggle with himself.

And here is Samson, the Sadow of the Old Testament. No withes can hold him, no ropes can subdue him, no walls can debar him. He walks away with the gates of the city! But he who by faith could stop the mouths of lions fell a prey to the flippant flapper from Philistia, and what ropes and walls could not do the captivating female from the valley of Sorek was able to accomplish. It was not when he lost his hair, but when he began to enjoy the caresses of Delilah's nimble fingers, that Samson became the sport of his foes. As the banqueting house at Gaza crashed in tumult upon his head, the tragedy of valor devoid of restraint was enacted once again.

David and Samson were men of heroic quality, who upheld the honors of their tribe. But triumphing over an ancient foe, they failed to furnish in their virtue the further grace of self-control, and thus went down to the gates of death with the accents of revenge upon their lips.

Take as a final illustration Solomon, the man of wisdom. How the spirit of Solomon's prayer appeals to the idealism of youth! As he ascends the throne of his father he seeks neither fame nor wealth. His ambi-

HARMONIES

tion is an understanding heart wherewith to judge the people. Apparently his prayer was answered, for the wisdom of Solomon has come down as a proverb to this day. But it is the character and experience of a man like Solomon that makes it imperative that knowledge shall come under the sway of moral purpose.

If between the pillars of Solomon's porch and over the arches of his temple and upon the walls of his royal chambers there had been emblazoned in letters of shining gold this motto, "IN YOUR KNOWLEDGE SUPPLY CONTROL," his reputation might have fared better, and his personality would not have been so hopelessly obscured. We can hardly disentangle his national achievements from the meshes of his personal apostasy. We can hardly see the majesty of the king for the multiplicity of his wives. His accommodating attitude toward the idolatry of the nations will endanger the spirit that created the temple. It is already causing dissension within his court and sowing broadcast the seeds of popular discontent, paving the way for the disruption of the kingdom.

For, notwithstanding a brilliant beginning, Solomon's chief end was to glorify and enjoy himself. His life is not so wrapped in the golden haze of romance but that we can mark this clear distinction that knowledge divorced from self-control may mean the downfall of a nation as well as the moral eclipse of a man.

The absence of any one virtue simply means the impairment of all. The presence of each one means the strengthening and transforming of all the others, so

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

vital and organic are the relationships existing in the sphere of morals. In his book on "The Story of the Soil," Dr. Cyril G. Hopkins tells of a tract of land on the borders of Indiana, Wisconsin, and Illinois where the soil was apparently rich but from which the farmers got little or no returns for their labors. Finally a scientific examination revealed a certain lack in the quality of the soil. Ten elements are essential to plant growth—oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, calcium, magnesium, potassium, phosphorus, iron, and sulphur. The soil in question possesses these elements in abundance—all but one. Potassium alone was lacking. An Experimental Farm was established in the community. Two narrow adjoining strips of land were sown in wheat, the one in its natural state and the other with potassium artificially supplied. The result? The crop on the one was scrawny and poor, hardly worth the expense of cutting; the other was tall, healthy, and abundant, yielding sixty bushels to the acre. The farmers saw with their eyes and were convinced. Nine elements may be present, but if the tenth is absent the result is exasperation and poverty. Potassium makes its contribution in turn to each of the other nine elements whose efforts at fruitfulness were aided and augmented by the presence of this one element. It is because of this coöperative law and its corollaries that our text is so emphatic and comprehensive, demanding the utmost diligence in supplying every Christian grace with the intensity and augmentation of power and

HARMONIES

enlargement of influence secured by the presence of kindred and complementary qualities.

Man has relationships with two worlds. He has his bodily appetites in common with the animal and his intelligence and power of moral distinction in common with God himself. Character is achieved in the struggle between contending forces, and man's progress is registered by the success with which he makes his lower nature subservient to conscious moral ideals. The upward trend of humanity has been due to the same principle. In the mere animal, the moral struggle is absent. In man appetites are not negated. The ascetic seeks their negation and fails. The epicure craves their indulgence and fails. The true man introduces the element of self-control, and he alone succeeds.

It may be that a moral world is not possible on any other basis. Where there is no effort there can be no achievement. Where there is no struggle there can be no fiber. It is the pressure of the opposing wind that gives grace to the movement of the bird in flight. The centrifugal and centripetal forces together keep the earth in its proper orbit. In all our efforts and aspirations we need the tug of the negative. Virtue is the onward push in the human sphere, and self-control is the additional moral quality which demands that no faculty shall get out of hand, that man's pace and the objects of his quest shall be such as his enlightened will approves and not those which his baser appetites alone desire. Our goodness must be not untried innocence,

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

but victorious virtue. Our hope is not in our inability to sin, but in our ability to conquer.

“Why comes temptation, but for man to meet
And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
And so be pedestaled in triumph?”

How wonderfully rich is man's original endowment! He has the power to feel, to think, and to know. In the realm of feeling, *faith* is the supreme faculty, giving substance to things hoped for; in the region of thought, *knowledge* is the nature of his inheritance; but in the sphere of will, *self-control* is the faculty in charge, determining the manner of his procedure and the disposition of his resources—here denial, there limitation, elsewhere the full and free employment of all his powers in the realization of a worthy end.

(a) There is the question of eating and drinking. Those who know insist that many of our physical ailments are due to overeating or lack of care in what is eaten. The evils of drink can hardly be overstated. The vulgar habits imbedded in the older civilizations in the matter of drink ought not to be inflicted upon us in this new land. “British freedom” means more than the freedom to get drunk. The conviction is ripening, and in due course shall be crystallized in universal law and custom, that freedom is to refrain from drink both for one's own sake and his brother's. The traffic in drink must be stamped with the mark of legal and moral condemnation. It is one thing to fall a prey to the vice of drink; it is quite another and an essentially more vicious thing coolly to calculate how

HARMONIES

this human weakness may be perpetuated and profitably exploited.

What damages the body and befogs the mind, what blunts the moral sense and in its first onset robs one of self-control, is an evil of the first order. It dissipates our resources and lowers efficiency in service. It robs vision of its keenness and takes the reins out of our hands. It puts passion in the saddle while the will is overthrown. Much of the crime and poverty of the world can thus be traced directly to the effects of this evil assiduously fostered and cultivated by those who trade in it. Let the evil thing be cast out!

(b) There is the question of the sexes. Let it be said at once that the married state is, in its own time and place, a morally higher state than that of single life. Motherhood is of a higher order than virginity. In the one there is the failure to fulfill a purpose evident and divine. In the other there is consecration in the spirit of holy love, issuing in the formation of a happy home. To suppress so fundamental a desire is to defeat God's purpose in a generation. To indulge it for one's own gratification is to rob it of ethical content. But to exercise the virtue of self-control in this sacred area is to do no less for humanity in our day than our parents have done before us. They gave us life with its magnificent opportunities, and we thank them for it.

There is a menace of mediocrity involved in the unrestrained propagation of the mentally and physically inferior, and still more in the selfish indulgence and

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

positive evil of those who artificially restrict the life of the family. The proverbially small family of the rich and the proverbially large family of the poor both point in the direction of thoughtless or considered self-indulgence.

There are homes where the only grief is the absence of little ones. And there are homes where ephemeral pleasures command the devotion which it is the will of God should be rendered to childhood. Not in self-indulgence which links us with the brute, and not in mere negation which dishonors nature's rôle, but in the light of knowledge and the grace of self-control shall be found a full solution of these delicate problems.

(c) How much misery is inflicted by a hasty temper! The home is blighted by it. The office is in daily dread of it. It is like a man strutting about with a revolver sticking out of his hip pocket. Temper, let it be remembered, is a moral endowment which the phlegmatic type do not possess. There is an eagerness and driving power, a nervous energy which is a priceless asset, a quickness of apprehension and a warmth of heart which rich natures alone can have and which may be capitalized for good. Man never shows to greater advantage than when under severe provocation he holds himself in control. There is nothing more pitiable than a richly endowed nature prostrate because of failure at this point. In harnessing your moral resources do not forget the bridle. The excuse of an uncontrollable temper simply means a temper uncon-

HARMONIES

trolled. It is your opportunity as a man and as a Christian to control it.

(d) The tongue is an agency for good or ill. Statesmen and reformers have done their work by means of it. Every great movement in the world—political, educational, and religious—has summoned to its aid the human tongue. The parliaments and councils of the land have arisen in response to the need for free and full discussion. Jesus wrote nothing, organized nothing. He spoke his divine message in words of authority and grace. Yet the tongue is too often requisitioned in the service of temper and ill will. Why should anger and spite so readily find words, like a cloud of poisoned arrows? Why should so great an agency for good be used in sowing discord among brethren, in wounding hearts, blighting reputations, besmirching character? Take a man's money if you will, but leave him his good name. Let the tongue be under strictest supervision and control.

What use do you make of your power in the pulpit, in the press, in the parliament? Upon it depends the final estimate of your Christian character. Given the leverage of a great institution a man must needs redouble his efforts in the matter of wise control, else his very power will become the agency of his own undoing.

How do matters stand with respect to wealth and its uses? The alienation between classes to-day is being accentuated by the ostentatious and vulgar display of wealth. The absence of reserve and modesty

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

in its enjoyment fosters a spirit of resentment on the part of those who have it not.

In the Christian life we are heirs of great spiritual resources. We are called to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Ours are the precious and exceeding great promises of God, and through them we become partakers of the divine nature. The great storehouses of faith and knowledge are opened out before us. It is not our possession of these, but our use of them, that shall determine our moral standing.

There is to-day the exploitation of religious fervor in the matter of healing that seems to me to be essentially pernicious. To say that some of our modern prophets of healing mean well is not to deny that the aftermath of their performances betrays an evil of far-reaching consequences. The homes where faith has broken down, the artificial excitement where moral standards have broken down, the insane asylums caring for those whose mental poise has broken down—all argue the fearful price of exploiting spiritual resources.

Few things are more significant in the life of Jesus than his restraint in this very matter. Early in his ministry the temptation came to him to use his power in display: "Convert stones into bread, leap from the pinnacle of the temple, ally yourself with the power and kingdoms of the world. Accept the people's offer of a crown. Show yourself to the world. Show them what you can do." He refused to satisfy a craven curiosity. He resisted and dismissed them all. "Get

HARMONIES

thee behind me, Satan, for thou savorest not of the things that be of God." His spiritual powers he devoted wholly to spiritual ends. He refused the ministry of fire and the support of the sword. Will the young people of this country and of this new land observe and ponder that Jesus positively declined any short cut to a coveted end? His reserve was ominously impressive. Pilate tempted him, but he answered nothing. The priests taunted him, but he held his peace. The elders accused him, but he answered never a word. When he was reviled he made no retort but committed his cause to Him who judgeth righteously.

His spirit in you will assuredly give you the victory. But you must coöperate with him. Look well to your brakes. "Beware of the quag on the left of the road." Watch and pray. Prayer is a mighty power in the regulation and direction of the will. Do something every day that will establish your mastery over yourself, something unattractive and distasteful. Read the riot act to your own dislikes. Insist that you and not they shall determine the course of your sailing this day. Provide your ship with a rudder. Gird up the loins of your mind and be sober. Settle the evil passion by the expulsive power of a new affection.

Above all, let the spirit of Jesus dwell in you. He is your higher and better self. He is infinitely more than this, but he is this. Give him full charge. Say, with Paul, "I live; yet not I, but Christ." Then you may do what you please.

VI

THE GIFT OF PATIENCE

"In your self-control supply patience." (2 Peter 1: 5-7.)

I READ in a morning paper an account of a railway accident that took place near Atlanta, Ga., a few days before Christmas. It was spoken of as "the Royal Palm and the Ponce de Leon crash." The report said that the north-bound train from Miami was late and that the superintendent of the line wanted to know why the special was running behind schedule. He took charge of the engine himself and with a pass order for a clear line began to speed up.

The last two words should be in italics, for they betray the secret of the whole tragic business. We are in a hurry to get to the end of the journey. We want things done, but we want them in short order or "in less than no time," as we say. Steam and gasoline have come to our assistance. Should they fail, we can fall back on electricity and the mysterious forces of the air. The motor car and the *aëroplane* betray our impatience at the limitations of time and space. Wireless messages and radiograms mark our most recent advance. They are but our icons of the god of speed. Modern civilization is going fast, but whither?

That is the question that gives us pause. For we know well enough that nothing of permanent value was ever achieved in a day. Jonah's gourd came up in a

HARMONIES

night, but it perished in a night. Myriads of flies lead a merry dance for a day, but they disappear with the setting of the sun. The sturdy oak takes centuries to reach maturity. This may be the only way to get a sturdy oak. Coal beds and granite beds speak in terms of a thousand years. It may be that this is the only way whereby coal and granite can be produced.

Civilization is discouragingly slow. Empires had to rise and fall before slavery could finally be abolished. It is a long call from the Wittenagemot of the early Saxons to the representative parliament of modern times. The story of the evolution of justice is a long and leisurely one and disheartening enough at times. The freedom of to-day looks back to Magna Charta, Bills of Rights, Declarations of the Rights of man, and to many a fierce and costly struggle waged in behalf of the liberation of the spirit of man. Many reforms and revolutions lie concealed in the moral and social advantages of our time. Privileges that sit lightly enough on us, others fought and died for. There is a difference between the charms and incantations of the days of Æsculapius and the assured results of modern medical science. How slowly and even grudgingly nature gives up her secrets! They are committed not to those of mere benevolent intentions, but to anxious seekers who scorn delights and who by quiet sympathy and patient endurance wait for her revelations. Four hundred and ninety-nine experiments fail. What matters it to the lover of truth as long as the five hundredth succeeds!

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

Say that man could have been created perfect and complete by the exercise of the divine fiat, how much of a man would he then have been? Sailors are made in the storm. So are men. Patience and struggle are a part of the necessary discipline through which real manhood is made possible. The soul of man is not a ready-made thing; it is an achievement. Man starts out with the possibility of a soul, and that possibility may or may not be realized. It is not a mere figure of speech to say that some people have no souls. They haven't. They have not gone through the necessary process; they have not endured hardships; they have not faced the storms; they have not withstood temptation; they have not breasted the currents; they have passed through no fires; they have climbed no mountains; they have faced no foes; they have seen no cross; they have achieved no soul. They have denied themselves the experience and opportunity that alone would make possible the realization of the powers and potencies of a soul within them. Questions concerning the present and future welfare of the human soul are well-nigh irrelevant with respect to some people. Atrophy has done its work. He who was born a man dies an animal. It is in patient endurance we win for ourselves souls. To say that we must "possess our souls in patience" is to allow the most significant part of this thought to evaporate in a questionable translation. The real appeal is for perseverance in the matter of faith and continuance in the matter of good works, through which alone the soul may be won.

HARMONIES

The making of a soul is the supreme business of life, and patience is the quality that, above all others, enters into the process. Thus understood, patience is not a passive attitude that sits and waits. It is not all "constitutional amiability and lymphatic indifference and stagnation." It waits, but only as the soldier waits until the war is over and victory is won. It waits as the mountain climber waits until foot by foot he scales the heights and looks down at last with the whole world beneath him. It waits as the explorer waits until his objective is attained. Livingstone waited until by his journeys he drew over the face of Africa the figure of a cross, and the Dark Continent was mapped out for all to see. Thus do we understand his high resolve never to stop until he had come to the end and achieved his purpose. We look for quick returns and make a bad bargain. We pull up the young plant to see how the roots fare. We are equipped with self-starters, but do not always make good finishers. The men who made contributions to the intellectual and spiritual forces of the world have something to say to us to-day in our eagerness to speed up. Here is Paul at the close of a life upon whose achievements God himself must have pronounced the benediction: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." Here is Plato determined that his vision of the ideal state shall be worthy in thought and literary form; he writes his "Republic" seven times. Here is Hegel engaged on the Herculean task of bringing the critical philosophy of Kant out of its

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

dualism to the unity of modern thought; he regrets that he is not able to write his "Wissenschaft Der Logik" not seven times, but seventy times seven. Here is Thomas Carlyle busily engaged in the study of the French and German languages that he may browse in the libraries of Europe in preparation for his "French Revolution." After two years of hard writing the work is now finished, and the manuscript goes to J. S. Mill for review. It is used to kindle the fire next morning. He sat down and wrote it again! And here is John Ruskin writing a friendly letter to his Oxford tutor: "Work with patience as well as with diligence and take care to secure every step you take. We do not care how much or how little you do, but let what you do be done forever."

Through faith and patience these men obtained the promises, and in so far as we are at all true to their spirit and can compare great things with small we shall never be satisfied until we have done our best in the confidence that time will justify us in our effort.

Patience means the exercise of self-control in the teeth of adverse circumstances, and to lose this gift is to lose the very spirit and instrument of progress.

The book of Revelation might well be called the "Book of Patience," so urgently and repeatedly does it exhort its readers to practice this virtue. The Church of that day was being put to the test. The spirit of Antichrist was abroad. Persecution had already set in. Nero was at work. What, then, are the few and feeble Christians to do? Listen to this:

HARMONIES

"I, John, am your brother in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus." (Rev. 1:9.)

"I know thy works and thy toil and patience, . . . and that thou hast not grown weary." (Rev. 2: 2, 3.)

"I know thy works and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first." (Rev. 2: 9.)

"I have loved thee because thou didst keep the word of my patience." (Rev. 3: 19.)

"Here is the patience and faith of the saints." (Rev. 13: 10.)

The spirit of patient endurance called for in this great book is the spirit that made it possible for the Christian Church to survive the cruel persecution of those early days. Loyalty to its high principles and devotion to the teaching of its Lord and Head must inevitably bring the Church into conflict with the outward forces of the world. We have an altogether wrong conception of religion when we think of it as so much insurance against a possible future catastrophe. Our appeals have been made too largely in terms of peace and quietness and not enough in the light of a holy crusade that is sure to bring us into open conflict with organized evil. Victory may be slow in coming. Our resources may appear seriously depleted. We may even be tempted to question the virtue of our cause. It is at this point the gospel of patience is needed. It is here the grace of holding on is needed. It is here the words of our Leader ring out, "Be thou

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." We have never been promised immunity from attack. We have never had any guarantees that the kingdom of heaven would be established without effort and that some fine morning we would arise to see it descending in all its glory from the skies. On the contrary, we have been forewarned that while in him we have peace, in the world we shall have tribulations. "But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Our impatience has already been anticipated by the parable of the kingdom, which is as if a man should cast seed upon the earth and should sleep and rise night and day and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how—"first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear."

We are impatient with ourselves, and as a result our progress has not been as marked as it should be. We must give ourselves a chance. To fail once is not to fail always. The possibilities of the Christian life are boundless. The powers of the human soul are limitless, and when the spirit of Christ comes into vital contact with the spirit of man, new forces are disengaged and new ideals beckon which it will take eternity to realize. "It is one of the conditions of the labor of men," says Ruskin, "that, in proportion to the seed sowing and the harvest is the fullness of the fruit; and that generally, therefore, the farther off we place our aims and the less we desire to be the witnesses of what we have labored for, the more wide and rich will be the measure of our success."

HARMONIES

Ordinarily the farmer goes forth in the morning to sow his seed, that in the evening he may reap the harvest. It is significant that Millet's sower goes out at sundown in the faith that while one sows, another shall reap.

There is an old doctor living in Western Canada who taught school in his native province of Nova Scotia previous to his taking up the study of medicine. With the assistance of the older scholars, he planted young maple saplings all around the school grounds and went his way. To-day they are large trees giving protection to the school in winter and shade to succeeding generations of children in summer. This is the spirit in which we, too, must do our work.

We are impatient at the ignorance and carelessness and sin of our fellow men. Why should we be? Jesus was very patient with them and said: "Thy sins be forgiven thee, go and sin no more." In this way alone he found an entrance into their lives. Many of them are doing the best they can and, like ourselves, are finding the road hard at times and the temptations too great for them. But it is amazing to see what God has been able to do with many of these people. He who could transform Simon the impetuous and unstable into Peter the man of courage and boldness and rock-like character can do wonders even with ordinary folk like ourselves.

Holman Hunt's "Light of the World" shows us a Christ standing at the closed door, lantern in hand, where every device known to the skilled artist is used—

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

the attitude of the body, the expression of the face, the look in the eye—to impress us with a patience that will not turn away until the door is opened and the waiting guest is welcomed within. But this was not the artist's original conception. In his first painting of this subject he represented Christ as ready to leave unless there was a ready response. It took him fifty years of Christian living to appreciate the patience of Christ.

The cause of temperance may not have made the progress that many Christian people wanted to see. Progressive temperance laws have not always yielded the results promised. But great gains have been made. One hundred years ago a minister of the gospel could join his parishioners in their convivialities and not lose his standing. Those who engaged in the traffic in spirituous liquors could still hold prominent offices in the Christian Church. That is not so in this country to-day. There is a marked contrast between the social standards condemned by John Wesley in England and Robert Burns in Scotland a hundred and fifty years ago and those we are familiar with to-day.

We are impatient with the League of Nations. The League has not given us a new civilization, it is true. Men's consciences have not been suddenly changed, nor have the policies of the nations been radically altered. But the League has done something and must be given a chance. It took fifty years to create the situation out of which the Great War arose. Is it too much to say that it will take fifty years and more before we can see the full outcome of the war or appreci-

HARMONIES

ate the full significance of the League? After making all allowances, it remains true that a new thing has appeared under the sun—wise and good men representing most of the civilized nations have been engaged upon the task of coördinating and organizing the forces of the world making for peace. So far the forces making for war have had the monopoly of organization. Now the spirit of peace is being clothed with flesh and blood and is finding for itself a voice. Already half a dozen wars have been prevented in as many years through the intervention of the League, not to mention the impetus given by it to many other social movements making for human betterment. If so much has been accomplished in less than ten years, may we not cherish the hope that when the purposes of this organization come to be better understood and the mental and Christian attitude it is intended to interpret comes to be more frankly stated, the nations of the earth will seek to compose their differences by having recourse to human reason and to achieve their legitimate national ambitions in terms of brotherhood and good will?

Christianity and the social order are still far apart. But we have reason to be encouraged. Social conditions to-day show a marked improvement on what used to weigh so heavily on the heart of Charles Dickens, to go no farther back, and the attitude to child labor betrayed in Arnold Bennett's "Clayhanger" would not be tolerated in any Christian land to-day. The position accorded women and children,

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

the regulations governing conditions under which men and women must work, the shorter period of work, the facilities provided for popular education, the care being given the lame, the halt, and the blind—all point in the direction of a downright attempt to put into practice the spirit of the Master. "Go tell John," he said to a committee of inquiry that came from the Baptist wishing to get evidence as to the genuineness of his religion; "tell John the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear." The evidence they brought back is evidence we can present to-day in behalf of a civilization which is slowly but surely responding to the benevolent implications of the gospel.

A number of prominent religious leaders have recently come to the defense of Christianity as against the charge that Christianity had failed. They say, "No, it has not failed," and then with an air of triumph, "It has not failed, for it has never been tried." If it be true that Christianity has never been tried, that it has not had within itself sufficient power and reality to try itself out in the course of these nineteen hundred years of its history, then so much the worse for Christianity. What, then, could it be but a failure? These earnest gentlemen prove too much. The character of their defense is the most convincing argument against them. Christianity has been tried and proved in the experience of men and in the life of the nations. If the millennium is not yet in sight, we are not, therefore, to conclude that Christianity is an

HARMONIES

untried religion. Speaking reverently, we must give Jesus a chance. He, too, was tempted to speed up when the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them made their appeal to him at the beginning of his ministry, and the temptation took very tangible form as the people gathered around him to offer him a crown. Some of his best friends thought he had missed the opportunity of his life that day, but he stood firmly in the conviction that his kingdom must be realized first of all as a spiritual reality in the hearts of men. Considering the material he has to work on in the form of unresponsive and hard-hearted people like ourselves, it is a wonder he has been able to accomplish so much. In the days of his flesh he was hindered by the apathy of the people of his own country, and in Galilee "He did no mighty work because of their unbelief." He is no less handicapped by the attitude and apathy of people to-day, and yet the greatest minds of the world since his time have paid homage to him and counted it their highest honor to be enrolled as his followers. Why do the wheels of his chariot delay their coming? Isn't there a tremendous amount of work that still remains to be done during this régime of the Spirit? Why so eager to "speed up" the work of God or the coming of Christ? A few millenniums must pass before we are half ready for his return. We listen to every religious vagary that shouts "Lo, here" or "Lo, there" and forget that his kingdom is coming all the time, not by observation, but by the quiet,

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

patient processes he set in motion in the hearts and minds of men.

Much remains to be done. But let us thank God for what has been accomplished through the efforts of those who before us brought faith and patience to bear upon every problem that faced them. We in turn may make our contribution to the furtherance of every good cause and the strengthening of the forces making for ultimate victory, in the confidence that he who sustained them will not fail us. At the most, let us say, "Lord, how long?" not, "Lord, this is too long." There is no discharge in this war. It is a life enlistment. It is to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality that the promise of blessedness is given. Can we make the prayer of Christina G. Rosetti our own?

"Grant us, O Lord, that patience and that faith:
Faith's patience imperturbable in Thee,
Hope's patience till the long-drawn shadows flee,
Love's patience unresentful of all scathe.
Verily we need patience breath by breath;
Patience while faith holds up her glass to see,
While hope toils yoked in fear's copartnery,
And love goes softly on the way to death."

Science has made advances, and knowledge has been vastly increased, but patience surpasses science and is the condition of knowledge. It is the secret of contentment and the very summit of prayer; it is the token of faith and the art of hoping; in love's overture it is the last appeal; it outlives the privations of this world and unlocks the gates of Paradise.

VII

THE CONDUCT OF LIFE

"In your patience supply godliness." (2 Peter 1: 5-7.)

WHAT is the meaning of the transition from patience to godliness? Is there a vital connection? One can see why *virtue* must follow *faith*; the inward conviction must register itself in the outward act. One can see why *knowledge* must follow *virtue*; resolution must be guided by intelligence. One can see why *temperance* must follow *knowledge*; the power which comes with knowledge must be under proper safeguards and control. But what was it that the writer of this letter had in mind when he said, "In your patience supply godliness"?

There must be a vital connection. Patience and *piety* (let us call it) do not stand in the relation of one stone lying against another, but rather as two branches on one tree or two flowers on one rosebush, sharing a common life and performing functions that are mutually dependent. The writer is not prepared to rest his case on the virtue of patience. He is moving on to a conception that will bring into clearer relief the positive implications of the grace of patience. This more positive and practical quality, which he longs to see realized in all those who have obtained a like precious faith with himself, is piety, the foundation of all other virtues.

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

He believes in the Christian doctrine and in its devotional appeal. He appreciates the divine voice and "the Majestic Glory." But he is thinking here more particularly of what we might call applied Christianity, of the piety that makes the religion of Jesus a thing to be desired, of the pious conduct which is the natural and spontaneous rendering of the Christian spirit in daily life. Patience wears an honest face. But we are afraid of the religion which consists largely in refraining from doing certain acts and things lest, perchance, we may do the wrong thing. We question the credentials of a religion which presents no winning and drawing quality corresponding to the attraction of the magnet or the fragrance and sweetness of the flower. We discount a religion that has no form nor comeliness, and when we see it there is no beauty that we should desire it. We reject the religion that exhausts its spiritual urgency in formal acts of worship and fails to show itself as an energizing spirit transforming and beautifying the lives and relationships of men. We cannot away with a religion that exalts self-mastery and integrity but lacks the power to make its ideals of personal morality and social righteousness effective because the upward look of piety is not there. "What holy and pious men ought you to be in your behavior!"

Life and piety go together. The conjunction in the thought of this writer is in itself significant. "His power divine," he declares, "has bestowed on us every requisite for life and piety." Religion does not narrow

HARMONIES

but expands the field of human endeavor. "The life of Christ is not a little province of peculiar emotion. If we fear that it may lose itself in the vast and often lawless universe of life beneath, the danger is to be averted not by willfully contracting it into a narrower field, but by seeking greater intensity of life in deeper and more submissive communion with the Head himself in the heavens."

Piety has its counterfeit. So has gold. The fact is in itself a presumption that it is a good thing. A counterfeit is the unwilling compliment which vice pays to virtue. When Jesus condemned those who were living for the semblances of religion, he was not thereby condemning religion. On the contrary he was commending it and showing his disappointment and grief at the misrepresentation of the genuine article. He himself was the most winning and attractive representative of the religious spirit the world has known. It is in the light of what he taught that we can understand religion in its simplest terms, and in the light of what he was recognize its helpful and practical outreachings. In the story of the Good Samaritan we learn from him the distinction between real and formal piety. The priest is bent on attendance at the temple service; the awe and reverence of public worship attract him. And who among us would underestimate the value of the temple service? It is the response to a real need of the human heart. The world is too much with us; late and soon, getting and spending, we lay waste our powers. In the superficiality

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

of our quest we grasp at the things that are seen and temporal and fail to see through them to the things that are spiritual and eternal. Our work is in danger of supplanting our worship. In these days of so many practical enterprises we must surely put emphasis upon the spiritual and objective value of corporate worship. The dogma of worshiping God in nature is being over-worked. When it becomes an excuse for evading the obligations involved in the continuance and support of organized religion, it is a species of self-deception that augurs ill for the future. The Pharisee of the first century was he who sought the temple and stopped his ears against the cry of need on the highway. The Pharisee of to-day may be he who jauntily takes to the highway, leaving it to his neighbors to do what may be possible to conserve the Christian character of the community in which he is pleased to make his home. He may say he wants to worship God in nature. What he does stamps him as a spiritual parasite, enjoying benefits for his family and himself which he does nothing to enhance. The one guarantee that the virtues of personal religion shall not become a mere vague and incoherent longing is that the spirit of the Christian faith shall be perpetuated in acts of corporate worship, and that it shall be fostered and quickened by the presence of One who is found where two or three are gathered in his name.

But we cannot afford to accept even this so worthy and essential a manifestation of the religious spirit as a substitute for the human sympathy we may show

HARMONIES

and the helping hand we may extend to him who is in need. This, too, is piety of a very real and practical order. The cry of a brother man fallen among thieves may be a more clear and compelling call of God than the sound of church bells on Sunday morning. It is not untrue to the spirit of Jesus to say that the reality of our worship is proved by the readiness with which we respond to the call of human needs. James was not writing a mere letter of straw when he declared that pure religion is to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction. The Good Samaritan had in him the secret of true piety, while the priest and Levite had the punctilious and unfeeling devotion to externals which has earned for itself the damning name of hypocrisy.

There is nothing in all the world more admirable and worthy than a good life. To achieve academic or economic success is one thing, to achieve in the realm of the heart and soul is quite another. It is a good thing to be well born and to rejoice in the heritage of a noble ancestry. It is a better thing so to live that the downright sincerity of our lives will impress itself unconsciously upon our acquaintances. Tennyson put the thought in permanent poetic form for us:

“Howe’er it be, it seems to me
’Tis only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.”

The true disciple will betray in his unguarded ac-

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

cents that he has companied with the Author of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

In our educational endeavors we are far too keen on turning out young people who are intellectually clever and give little concern to their love for the good and the beautiful. Evidence accumulates that in our eagerness to popularize education we have reduced the moral and religious features of the curriculum to a minimum. This is progress in the wrong direction. It would not be true to say that we stand for godless schools. The Christian character and the wholesome religious influence of most of our teachers is a guarantee against so great a tragedy. But it is true that a godless school will eventually mean a godless nation and that a godless nation is on the way to destruction. The spirit of those quaint and modest lines might well be enshrined in the ideals of every public school in the land:

"Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever;
Do noble things, not dream them all day long;
And so make life, death, and that vast forever
One grand, sweet song."

The home has assuredly its greatest opportunity at this point. Should the school and the Church fail in their unique opportunity, the home may still keep the lamp burning on the altar of piety. When the home fails in this, its primary duty, the school and the Church shall never wholly succeed.

There is nothing that can stand the test of the wear and tear of time but simple goodness and honesty of

HARMONIES

purpose. How little it matters whether a man is rich or poor, learned or unlearned! A gipsy, innocent of school and college but with heart aflame with love for God and man, can do wonders in his day, while the man of high degree passes out unwept and unhonored when his feet are not found in the way of righteousness. The heart of humanity is in its right place so long as its estimate of man is thus rendered. Therefore "to do good and to communicate, forget not." Therefore let us make this our motto, hang it upon the walls of our living rooms, and engrave it upon the tablets of our hearts: "I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do or any kindness that I can show to my fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

There is an obligation resting upon every one of us to make religion a thing to be desired. We, and not the intellectual experts, are the interpreters of the spirit of Jesus to our age, the spirit of courtesy, joy, and unfailing consideration for others. We are the open letters known and read of all men. The reputation of our Leader is in our keeping. Shrewd old Annas the High Priest "interrogated Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching," seeking, apparently, to establish a case against the Leader by discovering flaws in his followers. People shun him, being repelled by the drabness and cheerlessness of our lives. They follow him because they are drawn by the engaging quality of our speech and the sweet reasonableness of

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

our argument. "Our manners must be inspired by the good heart. There is no beautifier of complexion or form or behavior like the wish to scatter joy and not pain around us. 'Tis good to give a stranger a meal or a night's lodging. 'Tis better to be hospitable to his good meaning and thought and give courage to a companion. We must be as courteous to a man as we are to a picture which we are willing to give the advantage of a good light. . . . Do not leave the sky out of your landscape." The sage of Concord was a preacher before he became a writer, and his telling messages on "The Conduct of Life" are still potent.

Not only is it true that our behavior determines the attitude of others toward the religion we profess; our own progress is hindered or helped according to the manner of our daily life. Many a man of conspicuous ability has prejudiced his future by his outward coldness and apparent want of consideration for the feelings of others. On the other hand, many a man of few gifts has enhanced his limited powers by the grace of kindness and good will. "Courtesy is an endowment which men can acquire for themselves and one which is well worth acquiring. I have, to put its utility at the lowest, seen many instances of gifted men ruining their chances of getting on in life simply for want of manners. It is well worth while to try to act naturally and without self-consciousness and, above all, kindly. That is how dignity is best preserved. Some have a natural gift for it. All ought to try to acquire it."

HARMONIES

"Emerson and Goethe," says Viscount Haldane, "were both keenly aware of what injustice people do to themselves and to their prospects in life by not attending to the graces which, in their best form, come from goodness of heart and the fine perceptions which come from that goodness."

All of which plain speaking and high thinking on the part of great critics of life like Goethe, Emerson, and Haldane indicates that simple goodness is the true nobility, the true piety, the true godliness which commends itself by the genuineness of its spirit and wins our admiration by the transparent unselfishness of its motive.

Professor Moffatt, in his translation of 2 Timothy 3: 5, brings out a distinction which religion is always in danger of losing. "Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof," so reads the Authorized Version. Here is Dr. Moffatt's rendering: "*Though they keep up a form of religion, they will have nothing to do with it as a force.*" Religion as a form as against religion as a force! Religion as a sleeping draught as against religion as a quickening and transforming power. Morphine or dynamite, if you would put it so. We cannot afford to lose sight of this distinction. The wire is not the electricity, but an agency through which it works; the canvas is not the picture, but the medium through which the artist reveals to us his conception of the beautiful in nature or in life; the words are not the poem, but the outward and imperfect symbols by the use of which the poet seeks to

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

translate for us the meaning of his vision; the temple and its awe, the service and its reverence, the Church and its ordinances, Christianity and its institutional wrappings, religion in its intellectual formulations must forever be distinguished from the life that makes the world new, the spirit that sends men forth on the high road of adventurous living, and the ideal that challenges by the loftiness of its appeal, that allures by the warmth of its healing light, that eludes by the transparency of its ever-changing form, and entralls by its ever-waxing content.

The sovereign good is to love and be loved. This is piety in both active and passive voice; this, too, is godliness, godlikeness, clothing itself in human form, holding patience by the one hand and brotherliness by the other.

VIII

THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD

"In your godliness supply brotherly kindness." (2 Peter 1:7.)

IF the Church has failed, she has failed at this point. The spirit of brotherliness which Jesus looked for in his disciples and upon the unifying and redeeming quality of which he staked the future welfare of his cause in the world is not apparent in the institution that bears his name to-day, nor has it been for a thousand years. The whole tenor of the teaching of the New Testament is in praise of this virtue, the whole practice of Christian people contradicts it.

"A revival of Islamic activity is reported from South Africa, where a number of Christians have embraced Islam because they claim to find in it a truer brotherhood than in Christianity." A truer brotherhood in Islam than in Christianity? Is this the reason why whole countries ceased to be Christian and their people became ardent followers of Mohammed? Is this the reason why countless numbers of people cannot now be interested in the enterprises of the Christian institution? Is this the reason why people are turning in growing numbers to fraternal organizations outside the Church in search of the friendship they have failed to find within her walls? Is this, too, the reason why George Eliot made Bob the packman say

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

to Maggie in her longing for friendship, "Hev a dog, miss! They're better friends nor any Christian"? The Christian Church will never win back the confidence of the people in the adequacy of her teaching, nor elicit their enthusiasm for the beauty of her services, until those who are already within her fellowship illustrate the spirit of patience and forbearance in their treatment of one another.

We are told to be *tolerant*. Of course we must be tolerant if we are to live and work together, even with pagans and unbelievers. But toleration comes far short of the spirit and attitude required of those who acknowledge their fealty to a common Master. Christians must do more than merely *endure* one another. There must be mutual appreciation and concern for each other's welfare. "Tenderly affectioned" is the emphatic Scriptural word. Since Christians are members of one family, their love is to have the character of strong natural affection; it is to be warm, spontaneous, and constant. Their attitude to one another must win the admiration of those looking on from the outside. In the days of Tertullian the heathen exclaimed: "See how these Christians love one another!" The exclamation to-day, it is to be feared, would be of a very different order.

Godliness is a beautiful Christian quality. In a whole garland of virtues it is one of the few that suggests relationship to something high and worthy outside the individual believer. Courage, self-control, and patience are personal virtues; godliness has in it

HARMONIES

the suggestion of the upward look. It speaks of a relationship between the human soul and God. But even this so great a virtue does not go far enough. "Godliness," as Dr. Jowett puts it, "may be very regular and at the same time very icy and very cold. It is like a room without a fire. And what a difference a fire makes! Love brings the fire into the cold chamber, and godliness becomes a genial thing with a new glow upon it and a new geniality at its heart." In his famous speech at Bristol, Burke declared that "in doing good we are generally cold and languid and sluggish." Apparently Burke and Jowett think alike on this matter and are agreed with Matthew Arnold that morality should be "touched with emotion," that our religion should be possessed of a warm and winning quality, that godliness must be transfused with the spirit of brotherly kindness if it is to commend itself to the hearts and consciences of men.

What a problem we have, then! What a trust is committed to us! It is none other than to make the spirit of brotherliness an operative, regnant, vital, and all-pervasive force in the Church that was founded on this spirit and that has drifted far away from its original foundation.

Gibbon discussed the reason of the wonderful expansion of Christianity at the outset of its career, and he has alleged five causes: the zeal of primitive Christians, the doctrine of immortality, the miraculous powers of the apostolic Church, her pure morality, and the union and discipline of the Christian republic.

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

These causes are all significant and imply admissions one would hardly look for from so prejudiced an historian wherever the Christian Church is concerned. But with all his acumen Gibbon failed to go beyond what are at the best but the secondary causes of the early triumphs of the Christian institution. The primary cause is the spirit of brotherliness that pervaded it, the absence of which to-day is driving South African Christians into the arms of Mohammedanism, and driving European and American Christians into the arms of Churchless fraternalism or into downright materialism and indifference. But to account for the miraculous powers of the apostolic Church, her pure morality and her burning zeal, Gibbon must postulate, or we must postulate for him, the abiding presence of One whose discipline was founded on brotherhood and who counted on the practice of this virtue by his followers. Not by the work you do, but by the spirit you show, shall the world be convinced and won. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye love one another." The assurance of immortality is similarly conditioned. "By this we know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The secret of the power and effectiveness of the primitive Church lay not in the loftiness of her doctrine or in the thoroughness of her discipline, but in the manifestation before all the world of a spirit of brotherhood inherited from her Founder, based upon his teaching of the divine Fatherhood, inspired by his own example,

HARMONIES

and meeting, as nothing else could do, the social and spiritual longings of the human heart.

Let us assume, then, that this truly apostolic gift is restored to the Church; and if we ever prayed for special favors let us pray for the realization afresh of this ancient Christian virtue among all our people, that we may recognize the dangers inherent in a form of godliness divorced from the energizing and illuminating quality of brotherhood, that we may translate in terms of human relationships the implications of divine Fatherhood, and that we may learn to walk with him who is the Friend and Brother of us all.

What effect will the restoration of this ancient and distinctively Christian virtue have upon our religious life to-day?

1. It will endow the local congregation with the grace of friendliness and sociability, making it a center of attraction in the life of the community. People moving from one congregation to another will find a welcome and a Christian atmosphere where they will learn to be at home. Those coming from the countryside to live in the city, with its unyielding pavements and its more unyielding posture, with its artificial lights and still more artificial manners, will find a warm and cordial reception in the city Church. Its weekly services and the friendliness of its people will atone for the loss of the simple and idyllic scenes of the country where one knows all his fellow worshipers by their first name. People coming to share with us in this new land the glorious privilege of

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

building up a new nation, be they Angles, Saxons, or Danes, will find the ministries and activities of the Church helping to keep them in sympathetic contact with the best things they knew at home and a Christian interest that bespeaks a common spiritual heritage.

2. It will lead ministers of the gospel to show a kindlier and a more unselfish attitude to one another. There will be less self-seeking and a more generous attitude in interpreting one another's motives. The uncharitableness which we ministers sometimes show toward one another and the heat and impatience with which we approach each other's natural and legitimate differences often impose a severe strain upon the faith of our people and are of a piece with the attitude of the congregations to which we minister. Like people, like priest. There is observable a straining for position and the ambition to be first in honor and place, which explains the ineffectiveness of much of our work to-day. "Be not ye called Rabbi," said our Elder Brother, "for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." This golden statement might well be adopted as a motto to be emblazoned on every theological degree with a view to keeping those of us in the Christian ministry in sympathy with one another and with the ideal of humility and unselfish service which Jesus intended us to exalt before the outside world. As we exemplify in personal living that the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give himself, we shall come to realize the grace and beauty of brotherhood among

HARMONIES

those who would preach peace on earth among men of good will.

3. It will lead the spirit of denominationalism to make way for universal Christian fellowship. The divisive spirit apparent in the present situation is the negation of brotherly kindness. There may have been a time when the only way of securing the release of a spiritual idea was to start a new sect. It was a terribly big price to pay. But that time is long since past. In practically every Church in the land there is a communion table. Now, this table would never have been built but for the spirit of brotherhood which it was intended to symbolize and perpetuate. Whatever differences there may be regarding the significances of the Holy Supper, there is universal agreement that the institution would not have come into being but for the recognition and stimulation of the mutual affection and fellowship of believers. This sacred and beautiful service at the heart of the Christian Church is the most telling and substantial evidence that Jesus desired to give the spirit of brotherhood a foremost place in the relationships of his followers. The New Commandment is a prelude to the institution. The accent of the command falls not upon "love," but upon "one another," anticipating the fervent affection which Christians show to each other because they own a common Leader and entertain the same essential loyalty to his person and the same passionate devotion to his cause.

Now, the tragedy of the situation is that much of

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

our uncharitableness toward one another is shown in the neighborhood of this very table. Here, for example, is the confession of Dr. H. Hensley Henson, one of the many outstanding leaders within the Anglican Communion, who is able to look sympathetically beyond the borders of his own denomination and diocese: "Of fraternity among Christians as such, how much survives beyond the phrases? Loss of fraternity has involved loss of religious interest and in due course lack of religious knowledge. Forgive me if I speak more directly of the case of the Church of England, the most decorous and the least fraternal of all Christian Churches."

This and much else to the same effect, not from an unfriendly critic but from the pulpit of St. Margaret's, Westminster, and from the lips of a brilliant and loyal son of a great historic Church.

In what respects does he find this national Church lacking in the fraternal spirit? In adopting a position which to outsiders means something like this: Ministers who have been episcopally ordained are alone qualified to officiate at the holy table; [Anglicans have and find in the sacraments spiritual virtues which are hidden from Christians of other names and forms; Churches that are not episcopally governed are not Churches in reality, however fruitful and self-evidencing the witness of the Holy Spirit may be.

This is an attitude which Canon Henson condemned twenty years ago, and the logical development of it may be found in the regrettable *impasse* in the

HARMONIES

Anglican situation at the present time. The spirit that would to-day smite devout believers of the Free Churches with the (as yet unintelligible and undefined) rod of the "historic episcopate," may to-morrow smite equally devout Christians within the episcopal fold with the rod of "sacramental reservation" or some equally thorny shibboleth. The final solution of a situation like this is to be found neither in disestablishment nor in a revised prayer book, but in a new attitude.

At a notable denominational World Congress recently held in Toronto the spokesman appointed to define the position of his Church to other Churches made it quite clear that, paradoxical as it may seem, their witness to the reality of Christian brotherhood was to be given in separation from all other Churches. The Church that has throughout its history been most opposed to ritual is itself apparently to be cut off from fellowship with other Christian bodies because of a mere sacramental ritual. The program of the denomination as outlined at this formidable gathering includes the molding of the public opinion of the world, the establishment of world peace, Christianizing the social order, and the evangelization of the non-Christian nations of the earth. Any one of these world enterprises, one should imagine, would tax the material and spiritual resources of all our Christian people taken together. Yet the solemn pronouncement of this Congress goes forth that their witness to Christianity is to be by themselves apart!

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

There were great men at this assembly, men of international reputation in scholarship and service—and no one would dream of questioning their sincerity and Christian character—men who at heart deplore the tragedy of a divided Christendom, but the only man with courage to voice his protest against the implications of so insulating a policy was a humble delegate from China. This brother modestly ventured that to make good Christians might be of greater importance than to make sectarian gains. For an outsider listening wistfully for a word that might transcend sectarian barriers, "world brotherhood," a phrase frequently heard at this Congress, meant no more than denominational clannishness. In "walling in the sacred fire," says George Eliot, "what was intended to warm the hearts of all Christians becomes smothered in the overcharged atmosphere of sectarian zeal."

The late Father George Tyrrell sought a liberal attitude on the part of his Church toward the findings of devout and consecrated scholars in the fields of literary and scientific inquiry, irrespective of their denominational affiliations. But he paid a price for his daring. He who had served the Jesuit Order for nineteen years and resolved the intellectual difficulties of thousands of "the faithful" was finally forbidden to dispense the communion; and while declaring his unswerving devotion to the service of the mass, he was on his deathbed officially refused the last rites of his Church. George Tyrrell, by the clearness and

HARMONIES

originality of his thought and by his singularly beautiful if lonely life, did much to interpret the Reformed and Unreformed branches of the Christian Church to one another. The scene enacted by his grave side, when the tears of Protestants and Catholics alike mingled in a sense of common loss, and as they sang the song of a common Christian faith, was but an acted parable. What he sought to do in life he was able to achieve in death. The wider brotherhood implicit in his teaching found no favor with his official superiors, and the tragedy of his comparatively short life raises the question whether the Church of his choice and of his heart may not, after all, be the most uncharitable and un-catholic of all the Christian Churches of the world.

Here, then, we build our fences by elevating to the plane of essentials religious ideas in which we differ from other professed believers. Out of our denominational badges we weave a curtain that hides from us the shekinah on the faces of our neighbors and thus do despite to the spirit that rends every such curtain in twain. We gild our prejudices to make them look like principles and adorn our temporary formulations that they may assume the guise of eternal truth. Our theological thinking is below the moon and deprives us of the vision of our Father which art in heaven. Our zeal has been colored by the accidents of praiseworthy enterprises and blinds us to the glory of the universal kingdom. The noise of our sectarian doggerel drowns the music of our common

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

Te Deum. At the trysting place where believers are at one in their acceptance of Jesus as both Lord and Christ, we display the divisive features of mere opinions, and where the bread and the wine speak to us the universal language of human need we talk the tantalizing dialects of the local parish.

And so the whole tragic story of sectarianism and isolation moves on—Roman Catholics, Anglo-Catholics, Regular Baptists, Free Methodists, and the rest—alienating, ostracizing, and un-churching one another, while the great world of sin passes by in derision and the great Saviour of men looks down in pity at the estrangement of his followers and prays “that they all may be one.”

If “Catholic,” why “Roman”? If “Roman,” how “Catholic”? Can a Church be distinctively “Anglican” and at the same time “Catholic” or universal? Are not all Baptists “Regular,” and all Methodists “Free”? Our qualifications are the self-confessed denials of our assumptions. Why should the spirit of Christian brotherhood be poisoned by a participle, stabbed by a hyphen, or damned by an adjective? Did not he who is our Leader say, “All ye are brethren”? Did he not urge, as against the spirit of exclusiveness already showing among his disciples, “He that is not against us is with us”? How long are we to continue this altogether sinful and un-Christian practice of unchurching and condemning one another and of accentuating the divisions we deplore in our prayers and widen by our practice, when we know,

HARMONIES

and all the world knows, that what we need above everything else is to draw closer together that we may worship in the bonds of a common brotherhood and serve in the accomplishment of a common task?

But there are hopeful features in the situation which in justice must not be overlooked, indicating as they do that the angels of unity have been disturbing the waters and promising health and healing to a divided Christendom.

There are the findings of the gatherings of representative Churchmen at Geneva and Jerusalem, where the spirit of a wider brotherhood found a voice; there is the Lambeth Appeal, with its emphasis on Christian fellowship as fundamental and its promise of better things to come; there are the recent proposals of the Methodist Episcopal Church to other Christian bodies; there are the recent pronouncements of the Council of Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian system, in which yearning for the union of our Christian forces was the dominant and recurring note; there is the union of the three branches of Methodism in England to be realized in less than five years; there is the union of the Established and United Free Churches in Scotland recently come into effect; and there is the union of the Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches in Canada consummated in June of 1925. The results of this great adventure are already apparent. Resources, both material and spiritual, have been conserved, as a result of which people living in neglected areas of our own country

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

are, for the first time, having the gospel preached unto them. There is especially the realization of a Christian fellowship wider, deeper, and richer than was possible under the denominational régime. A generous spirit of brotherhood has been released, justifying the faith and courage of the leaders of the great experiment. There are dangers inherent in a situation like ours, as there are in every great movement. Unless we interpret sympathetically the spirit of brotherhood to our fellow Christians who agree with us or who, perchance, may be pleased to differ from us, we fall short of our ideal. We must illustrate the Christian attitude among ourselves and reach out a friendly hand to every group of Christian people, not that we may win them to our cause, but that we may share with them the burdens that belong alike to us and to them. Any show of arrogance because of recent achievements or present numerical strength would strike at the very heart of the United Church and disqualify her as the interpreter of Christian union and brotherhood to other Churches in the world. Ours is but a step, and a short step, in the great movement for a closer fellowship and in the endeavor to fulfill the prayer of our Lord, "that the world may believe." In taking this step let us beware lest the denominationalism we were supposed to have relinquished take possession of us in a more subtle and dangerous form. Only as we show the more excellent way shall we be vindicated in what we tried to do. Only as we supply brotherliness

HARMONIES

in our daily piety shall our faith commend itself to Christian people generally and to the world at large.

But the movement and adventure on the part of the Canadian Church is only one of the many finger posts pointing the way. They are but the anticipations, the heralds of a better day, when brethren of the New Covenant shall dwell together in unity, when the spiritual forces of Christendom shall present a united front to the common foe of selfishness, irreligion, and worldliness. If the last four hundred years have been distinguished by the operations and tragedies of individualism and the divisive spirit, let us hope that the century we live in may be known to the future Church historian as the one during which many of the fragments of Christ's broken body were brought together to realize their spiritual and organic oneness in him. Thus we may be able to present his message more coherently and convincingly to the non-Christian world and to experience composure and peace in fellowship born of a reunited Christendom.

4. It will prevent Christian nations from destroying one another in war. We become enthusiasts over the League of Nations and all that it promises to do in conserving the peace of the world. We are now in a position to see the absurdity of attempting to resolve international problems by resort to force. To prevent the overthrow of modern civilization we see the necessity of giving human reason and judgment a chance. War is a discredited institution; it has never yet redeemed a promise. And the League of Nations

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

to prevent war is worthy of all the encouragement and support that Christian people can give it. This and much else goes virtually without saying. But let this fact be recognized, that the League can go no farther than the people represented in it. As we teach the will of Christ that his followers should not slay one another, we shall help to create an atmosphere where the League can operate. When we make the spirit of peace effective within the Church itself, we shall be entitled to look to the war lords to beat their swords into ploughshares, and to our statesmen to transmute their spears into pruning hooks. The final solution of this age-long question is not, therefore, in the organization of a League or in the setting up of a world court or in the signing of a peace pact, however formidable in words, so long as we continue, through governments and private enterprises, our usual avocation of preparing, in ever-larger quantities, destructive instruments of warfare. Not in these agencies, however praiseworthy, but in the realization of the spirit of mutual coöperation which is but the outward manifestation of the spirit of brotherhood among men. This is *par excellence* the task of the Christian Church, and it can never be faced in any formidable way in the atmosphere of denominational self-complacency. War is unbrotherliness, the spirit of Cain clothed with flesh and blood. War is a disease which can be cured only by the application of its antidote, the spirit of friendship and good will.

5. It will lead us to do for our own poor and needy

HARMONIES

the benevolent services which have been largely handed over to the officers of the State. "Never address the village outcast as you would not speak to your dearest friend," George MacDonald once urged. A beggar asked Tolstoy for alms, but the one-time wealthy count found his pockets empty. "I have nothing to give you, brother, but if you will come back to the house with me, I will get you something." "O, I don't need anything," said the poor man. "But I thought you asked for money," said Tolstoy. "Yes, but you called me *brother*, and that is better than money." How true of us all,

'Tis but a brother's speech we need,
Speech where an accent's change gives each
The other's soul.

The Church should be the greatest mutual benefit society in the world. It is so now, but only to the extent that the spirit of brotherhood has been given free scope within her policies. Our benevolences cannot be done by proxy. Our hospitality must be given visibility. Our conduct must take cognizance of the weaker brother. The world must be given a fresh vision of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, not the Anglican, Presbyterian, or Roman type, however brilliant the witness of these and other types may have been in their own splendid isolation, but the Christian type, where sympathy shall be the symbol of authority and service the badge of greatness; where holiness shall be humanized and catholicity made gracious; where unity shall be distinguished by freedom

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

and apostolicity by spiritual fruitfulness; where the password, "Philadelphia," shall admit all seekers after fellowship to the riches of the glory of our inheritance—a vision of the Church as the true "Society of Friends" which exalts the kingdom of God above all denominational interests and recognizes the lordship of Jesus as supreme in every walk of life.

IX

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE

"In your brotherly kindness supply love." (2 Peter 1: 7.)

THE last word has not yet been spoken. For a time it seemed that brotherly kindness was that word. What a noble word it is, standing for one of the rarest elements in our religion! It speaks of the distinctive attitude of one Christian toward another. The world would be vastly better than it is and the Christian Church in much higher repute were this virtue more attractively and universally illustrated in daily living.

But at the best it is not enough. Its outward reach does not extend sufficiently far. There is an area of thought and Christian experience stretching out beyond, which must somehow be possessed. It says: "You must be kind to your fellow believer, whatever his social standing may be. What you hold in common with him as an acknowledged follower of the Nazarene is more than all the differences which might otherwise divide you." But there is a higher virtue which demands that we be kind and tolerant to those of other beliefs and to those of no beliefs, if such can anywhere be found upon the earth. Brotherly kindness says, you must be considerate toward those of your own Christian family circle. There is a virtue that overleaps this circle and in its regard for the

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

well-being of others is as wide as the world. Brotherly kindness says: "Bless them that bless you; love them that love you; when your friend constrains you, go with him a mile; love your neighbor as yourself; bestow your gifts upon those who need them." These obligations rest upon you only in so far as they concern those of your own faith. But there is the higher demand of the Christian ethic which says, "Go the second mile, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."

Love alone; love without limitation; love transcending all barriers; love in its blindness, showering its favors upon the good and the bad alike; love in its prodigality, scattering good seed in every kind of soil; love in its magnanimity, filling the whole house with the fragrance of its gratitude; love in its universality, comprehending a world in its redeeming, beneficent sway; love in its loyalty, laying down its life for a friend; love sacrificing and forgiving; love creating, renewing, restoring—love alone is the answer and the only permanently soul-satisfying answer to this higher demand. In your brotherly kindness supply love.

Love is essentially creative. It has been the operative principle in the story of the world from the beginning. Love begins. There would have been no

HARMONIES

world of life and progress but for its creative activity.
We give thanks

To Him that by understanding made the heavens,
For His loving-kindness endureth forever;
To Him that spread forth the earth above the waters.
For His loving-kindness endureth forever.

Let us look at this virtue as it answers to the being of God, as it interprets the nature of man, and as it is reflected in the thought and spirit of Jesus.

There is but one word by which we may define God without limiting him. It has taken the race all these long centuries to know God, imperfect and rude as our knowledge of him still is, to understand something of his "being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." Not one of these attributes can be understood except in the light of a higher attribute. When John says, God is love, he gives a more comprehensive answer to the age-long question than the whole theological vocabulary of the Westminster divines. Our outlook upon human history and life is tremendously affected by our conception of the nature of God. As a man thinketh of God in his heart, so is he. Believing in him as God the Father Almighty, we can see him creating the best possible world, to which he will not deny his most precious gifts and which he will not finally cast as rubbish to the void.

We could not understand the beauty of the earth and all of sound and color within it that makes the heart glad but for the love of God that has brooded over it from the first day. I walk by the banks of the

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

Cornwallis in the springtime and catch the sweet fragrance of the trailing arbutus, and I can already whisper, "God is love." I saunter by the mighty rocks of Juniper Island and gather blue violets by the Muskoka Lakes in early summer, and I can say aloud without fear of contradiction, "God is love." I meander over the prairies of Western Canada or stand amazed at the sea of anemones all around me, and I am compelled to exclaim that "God is love." I sail over the Arrow Lakes on a June day with the fragrance of the wild rose wafted down the mountain slopes, and a song of praise escapes me with the refrain that "God is love." I listen to the sounds of falling waters or the songs of birds at daybreak, and I marvel how so much of poetry and sweetness could have been half concealed in this old world of ours. There is but one clue, that God has been graciously at work transferring to the varied products of his handiwork something of the infinite beauty and harmony of his own divine nature.

I take it that all the fundamental doctrines of our Christian theology are founded on our faith in God as love. These doctrines cannot be discussed here. But certain questions thrust themselves upon us: Why should there be a *revelation* of God? Is it necessary that he should make known his purposes to the sons of men? By what compulsion must he? It is necessary on the one presupposition that his nature is love, but on no other. Love is essentially self-communicative and must declare itself. Again, is it

HARMONIES

necessary that God should tabernacle in the flesh? Not if he be anything less than love. But assuming that we have here the clue to his true nature, that he cares for men and gives them a place in his thought, we cannot but postulate his complete identification with them. The prophet Hosea found the secret of his people's apostasy in their syncretizing devotion to Baal and declares that "they became abominable like that which they loved." The converse is equally true, and God himself, loving the sons of men and communicating himself to them, will eventually become one of them. *Incarnation* is inseparable from the conception of a loving God. The God who fails to find a home within the compass of our human experience is not the God of Christianity, nor is his nature love.

Sin in its most heinous form is sin against love, and the conception of hell is but the reverse side of a love that has been sinned against; *repentance* is made possible by realizing for the first time the magnanimity of love; *forgiveness* is a personal experience where love records its daily triumphs; *atonement*, an ominous word embodying a profound religious thought, suggests the outreaching, reconciling, redeeming efforts and achievements of love in reclaiming those who have spurned its inward promptings and in lifting those who have ignored its upward call. With Browning's *Paracelsus*, then, we must say,

"God, thou art love! I build my faith on that;
It were too strange that I should doubt thy love."

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

A brilliant young missionary is back for his first furlough and addressing the local conference of his Church. "I had no thought of being a missionary," he declared, "but one Sunday morning a strange minister appeared in our home pulpit. He belonged to one of the denominations (now in our United Church of Canada), the soundness of whose theology and the sincerity of whose religion I had been warned seriously to question. His voice was soft and gentle above the ordinary. His face was kindness itself, and his prayers, betraying a rare familiarity with the devotional language of Scripture, lifted us all, in their intimacy and communion, to the very foot of the throne. For his text he announced, 'God is love.' Most of the sermon I have forgotten, and the saint of God (the late R. P. MacKay, D.D., Secretary Emeritus of the Foreign Mission Board of the United Church of Canada), who preached it, I never had the joy of meeting. But the spirit of that service and the kindness of 'that one face' sent a young man home resolved that 'if God is like that man, I want to serve him and tell the world of his love.'"

To say that God made man in his own image implies that he planted something of his own love in his heart. True, it is not always apparent in man's behavior. It is far easier to believe in him as self-seeking and unlovable. The qualities which he early exhibits to his fellows, and which are to be seen on the surface, suggest his kinship with the brute. But man has been moving forward through the long centuries

HARMONIES

in response to his higher impulse. Not instinct, or reason, or self-interest, but love is the secret of his upward trend. The progress of civilization has been made possible, for example, by the existence and sanctity of the home. It is love that makes for social human happiness. There is only one way in which people can learn to live happily together, and in so far as love pervades the home atmosphere, each succeeding generation has the promise of a fresh advance. Love is the golden thread that runs through human society, giving it coherence and permanence. Where there is no love there is no home, and where there is no home there is no continuing and advancing civilization

Man's highest endeavor has always been inspired by love of the good, and every institution that gives our civilization its Christian character has been established in this spirit. We think of the poor and of the widening and more hopeful provisions being made for the less fortunate of our kind, of the higher law of the survival of the unfittest, and in every instance we find that it is love in its patience and sympathy that has been at work. It was when love came to be supplied in brotherly kindness that the consciences of men and women became sensitive to their responsibility for the unwholesome social conditions under which many people live; and the strong accent that falls upon social service to-day, and the insistent demand that Christianity must vindicate itself in modern life, is one which found a voice when the im-

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

plications of God's love for humanity came to be really understood.

Christianity did not introduce love to the world. It was here from the beginning, but not seen in its true light until Jesus gave us the story of the ninety and nine. There we recognize for the first time that he finds in man that which is distinctive of the heart of God. He believes in man and in his power to respond to his appeal, because the elements of love are already within him, dormant and misunderstood, it may be, but there nevertheless.

I see no reason why we should share with other nations the peace and joy of the Christian faith; I can understand the appropriateness of being kind to those of the household of faith; but I cannot understand or justify the expense, the tireless effort to make the religion of Jesus the possession of the whole world except on the presupposition that love transcends all barriers, abolishes all distinctions, breaks down every wall of partition, and demands with the urgency of a divine decree that the whole human family shall be treated as one. Favors enjoyed by one race or nation are not intended as an exclusive possession, but as a sacred trust which carries within it the obligation that it shall be shared by all the sons of men. Love alone makes these demands and releases a sense of world responsibility. Love alone inspires the great missionary movement, one of the most hopeful features in the program of the Christian Church to-day. Love will never rest satisfied until every nation and tongue

HARMONIES

and tribe and people shall have had the message of salvation freely proclaimed and shall have been privileged to join in the chorus of redemption and triumph.

It is not at all an easy thing to say what is original in the life and teaching of Jesus, if we leave out his emphasis on love. But to ignore this emphasis is to omit the part of Hamlet from the play that bears his name. It was the love of God that inspired his mission, and his love for men that guaranteed its acceptance. Love is the Fujiyama among the mountain peaks of his sublime thought in the Sermon on the Mount. It is no less apparent in his parabolic teaching. Who could think of the story of the Good Shepherd or the Prodigal Son without thinking of a love that will not let us go?

Jesus' life forms a perfect commentary on his teaching. A young man of high quality inquires of him the way to eternal life. The lure of the passing world is also upon him, while the deeper quest disturbs his soul. And we read that "Jesus, beholding him, loved him." Knowing the hold his worldly possessions had upon him, he still loved him. This surely is his attitude to all young people of serious mood. He knows their temptations, but sees beyond them to the spiritual longing of which all lesser quests are but hints, perversions, and misdirections.

Here is a woman whose spirit has found release because she heard upon his lips words of forgiveness and hope. Her gratitude must show itself in some

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

gift or token. The breaking of an alabaster box is that token, and Jesus graciously and significantly accepts it. Love and sacrifice never failed to win his admiration. The people forsook him, a friend denied him, an apostle betrayed him, but he loved them still; and when he prayed, "Father, forgive them," he was but placing his seal and signature to the everlasting covenant of redemption. Love alone will die for its object, and the love that so dies will assuredly live to proclaim to the world a gospel of resurrection and eternal life.

As we look back upon the "garland of virtues" which we have vainly tried to consider in their separateness, we find that they are not really separate, but precious flowers bound in one organic cluster; integral parts in a divine symphony where love is the dominant note; so many links in a gold chain that binds us about the feet of God.

Faith without love is like theology without religion; knowledge without love is like a large house on a mountain side, empty and drear; patience without love is but Jacob without his Rachel, drudgery and disappointment; godliness without love is a theological iceberg, magnificent but cold. Love gives new grace and power to every virtue and is not only the fulfilling of the law, it is the heart of the gospel, the fruit of the spirit, and the elixir of life.

Love never faileth. Diligence will bring its due reward, and faith will be swallowed up of sight; virtue will become enshrined in character, and knowledge

HARMONIES

lay bare the secrets of a world as yet replete with mystery; self-control will have attained the disciplined will, and patience will be sublimated in the glow of perfect work; godliness will have become transmuted into its equivalent human elements, and brotherly kindness into the texture of universal sympathy; but love abides and will absorb within itself all that endures in every lesser virtue and transform and beautify it by the penetrating, preserving quality of its own divine aroma.

PART II
ANTIPHONALS

X

FLOWERS OF THE HEART

"When wilt thou save the people?
O God of mercy, when?
Not kings alone, but nations!
Not thrones and crowns, but men!
Flowers of thy heart, O God, are they;
Let them not pass, like weeds, away—
Their heritage a sunless day.
God save the people!"

—*Ebenezer Elliott.*

WHAT is the most crying need of the world to-day, with its seething, restless spirit and its ever-recurring conflicts, if it be not a more just and worthy estimate of man? Given this estimate, governments will think less of party advantage and more of service to man in his varied relationships. Educationists will be less concerned with tradition and more anxious to disengage the elements distinctive of human personality. Our organized educational endeavor at the present time is calculated to eliminate the distinctive features of the individual, in the interests of a general educational program. With a view to greater originality and progress, our aim must be, not alone to develop those gifts we all enjoy in common, but to bring into play those powers and qualities wherein one life differs from another.

The state is not an end in itself. It has value in so

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

far as it fosters and maintains a civilization through which its members may attain their true end. States have crumbled to dust because they failed to do justice by the individual citizens composing them. Our laws must be formulated less in support of the few whose privilege it has been to exploit the many, and more in the interests of the individual citizen who must needs be protected from the concerted movements of the designing groups. The trend of human society is in the direction of a fuller recognition of the individual. Our leaders in finance, industry, business, and politics must all take cognizance of this trend. The love of power must make room for the love of people. Individual welfare and industrial progress must go together. Financial institutions must use, in the service of the public, the powers conferred upon them by the public. Highly organized combinations of business may be encouraged, but in terms of greater service rather than greater profits. The love of dividends must yield to the love of men.

Slavery has had a recognized place in every civilization upon the face of the earth. Plato's ideal state makes provision for it. Pharaoh accepts it. Cæsar never dreams of questioning it. What Livingstone called "the great running sore of the world" finds no condemnation whatsoever in the classical writings of antiquity. Even in modern times Christian pulpits have pleaded for its continuance, yet in a tragic and wholesale fashion it made human life mean and cheap. Woman inherited this aspect of a former civilization

ANTIPHONALS

until very recent times, and certain features in our present-day conventions, placing her at a disadvantage, are but survivals of an ancient evil principle.

Notwithstanding these survivals reaching down to our day, slavery as an institution has been abolished, and he would be a bold man who would raise his voice in favor of its restoration. The conscience of mankind turned against it as an evil thing which degraded man, undermined society because it denied the very principle of society, and ultimately destroyed the very civilization resting upon it.

War has held the front of the stage for a long time now. The jealousies of royal houses, the intrigues of court life, and the complications of secret diplomacy have had to be aired upon many a bloody field. Differences of race and creed have been accentuated and designedly played upon in the aggressive propaganda incident to war.

Yet war never settled anything. It has stilled the hearts of our bravest and best, but not the storm it was calculated to avert. The fact is becoming more patent every day. War is a discredited institution and a failure. For the last hundred years it has been trying vainly to justify itself by specious appeals to a self-contradictory recruiting slogan, "War to end war." The fact that its advocates should find themselves obliged to resort to such indirections to make themselves heard is in itself an admission of first-rate importance. War can no longer make its appeal on its face value. It comes not in its own name, but

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

in that of its opposite. It offers itself as the shortest possible route to the realization of humanity's age-long dream of "perpetual peace." Thus deceived, men give themselves to the settlement by force of differences which exist upon a plane where force makes no impression.

War comes, we say, as a result of the conflict of national ideals. Conflicts of ideals are never settled by appeal to arms. Further, differences of less significance are not worth the sacrifice of the most promising life of the nation. Sacrifice has value only as it achieves moral and spiritual ends. War has never achieved either. It is an evil which the conscience of mankind must surely, if slowly, condemn. If the League of Nations will not accomplish this purpose, some other league will, some organization of the reason and intelligence of the world. The enlightened judgment of mankind is coming to realize that human life is too valuable to be wasted in a futile attempt to compose differences which remain intensified and aggravated after the smoke of battle has lifted.

In the language of the Covenant of the League of Nations, *drink* is coupled with slavery and war as another ancient evil from which our common humanity must be redeemed. Slavery sacrifices one class in the service of another. War destroys young men while it spares women, children, and the unfit. No better system could be devised for the final undoing of our humanity—none, except the drinking habits of our people, approved by law and stimulated by all the

ANTIPHONALS

devices known to a highly profitable trade. Drink destroys all classes, from the unborn child to the alcoholic addict hurrying prematurely to his grave. Self-imposed slavery is morally hopeless. The shackles others forge, I shall one day shatter. Those I voluntarily adopt I may never unfasten. In the one case there is the surrender of the will; in the other, the inward protest which has in it the promise of future deliverance and hope.

The love of money and the domination which its possession makes possible never shows itself in a more treacherous or deadly form than when it comes in the name of freedom and compassion for the poor, offering the solace of drink. When the traffic is obliged, in its own defense, to speak of "temperance," "moderation," and "personal liberty"—the vocabulary of those who are bent upon its overthrow—it, too, makes an impressive admission indicating that its days are numbered. Like war, to make itself passable, it speaks the language of its opponents. The deception will be successful but for a time.

The waste of body, the menace to human morals, and the spiritual tragedies being enacted by the trade, still enjoying the salute of the makers and administrators of our laws, count for nothing in the eyes of those whose lust for easy money must be gratified and whose ancient rights of spoliation must be conserved at all hazards. But slowly and surely the tide is coming in, a tide which will sweep this traffic in human life into the limbo of forgotten and despised things.

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

Slavery, war, drink, and the greatest of these is drink. Our civilization must destroy them or be destroyed by them. To destroy them we must break down what remains of the faith of mankind in this unholy trinity. Theirs is a unity of aim and purpose. Their differences are of degree and not of kind. With varying secondary motives, with the lust for power as primary and dominant, each institution in turn means a callous and unscrupulous traffic in human life which must be exposed in all its inherent ugliness and, in the name of every rational principle and on the authority of every Christian virtue, condemned by all who love their kind.

These changes are coming, not because of the evident economic waste and consequent financial bankruptcy involved in our blind and unthinking devotion to these hoary institutions, but because of a change in our scale of values, because of a new estimate of man. We have been slow in putting to the practical test the high conceptions of human life we have cherished. But we are coming to recognize the inherent worth of man and to determine our attitude to ancient customs and to adjust our social programs accordingly.

In that lofty psalm of creation in the book of Genesis it is apparent that the writer desires to indicate an essential difference between man and all other created things. The drama moves on toward a lofty climax for which every act and scene is but a preparation—the entry of man upon the stage in the image and likeness of his Creator. To speak of “breath-

ANTIPHONALS

ing into his nostrils the breath of life" is the sacred writer's way of saying that man is essentially different; to speak of him as "becoming a living soul" is to say that man is infinitely higher than anything that has gone before. Positively it is a declaration that between him and his Creator there is a relationship vital and unique.

When a New Testament writer declares that man is the workmanship of God, he is but bringing into clearer light the thought already anticipated in Genesis. Man is heaven's masterpiece. How a poet delights in the product of his own mind! How an architect loves the cathedral that interprets in stone his sense of beauty and proportion! How a father delights in the child of his own heart! Even so God delights in man, the highest and most perfect product of his creative action.

In mind and will he has kinship with his Maker. He can think of the remotest stars, yet he knows himself to be greater than they; he loves the beautiful without, because it awakens the love of the beautiful within his own soul. He is free to govern his life, and knows that in the misapplication of this power he may thwart the very designs of the Almighty. His greatness shows most clearly at the very point where his greatest danger also emerges—in the exercise of his human freedom. No abuse of this so great a power can deprive him of the distinction of having been made in freedom and knowledge in the very image of his Creator.

The movement for the liberation of man from the

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

domination of ancient and oppressive institutions received its inspiration and its greatest impetus from the Christian teaching. The presence of Jesus in our human life was not the negative result of man's sin, but the positive expression of divine life within the compass of our human experience and further confirmation of man's dignity and worth.

I am told by the Positivist that I should worship humanity. But long before Comte made this appeal there lived another who said: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God." Any right I have to worship humanity or to spell it with a capital has come from him. If we must worship humanity, we must see Jesus in the glory of his manhood, in his compassion for the multitudes, and in the wonderful spiritual power of his personality. Our estimate of the worth of man can never be made apart from him. To leave him out, in our quest for a formula that shall be just to man in all the implications of his complex nature, is to prejudice the argument from the start. There are broad hints that come to us from his recorded sayings, concrete fragments suggestive of a whole body of thought concerning man and his ideal worth. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." "What man

ANTIPHONALS

shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much is a man, then, better than a sheep?" When we read these familiar statements and ponder them in the light of the further implications of his teaching in parables like that of the Prodigal Son and the Good Shepherd, we find a clear reflection of his wonderfully high conception of man's life. Dr. Mayo says a man's body is worth ninety cents in war time. In the calculations of high heaven his life is worth more than all the world besides. The sparrow is the object of divine concern. Of how much greater concern is the life of man? Here is the Sabbath, the sacred institution which makes possible the development of the religious spirit on the one hand, and man with his needs on the other. Which comes first? Man comes first. Man, in whose moral and spiritual interests the institution came into being, is infinitely greater than the institution. Wherever a conflict arises between man and the institution intended to serve him, man and his welfare claim the first consideration. All institutions would do well to ponder this. Legislatures and courts of justice, industry and commerce, schools and colleges, Churches and their creeds, cathedrals and their ritual—these were all made for man, to minister to his manifold wants; these exist for him, not he for them.

Man always comes first in the teachings of Jesus. But our greatest justification for rating his life so highly is to be found in Jesus himself. To see man at

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

his best we must consider Jesus as he mingles with folk in their sufferings and pains and as he gives himself to them in helpful sympathy and loving devotion. To read that "virtue went out from him" is to realize his overflowing compassion for the sinful and the lost; to know that he wept by the grave of his friend is to understand that he was not high and lifted up above our common aches and pains; to see him as he moved with compassion for the multitudes is but to realize that he has unbounded confidence in man and his value to God, and that he is willing to pour out his own soul unto death to bring him to a true appreciation of his own inherent worth. Jesus died to vindicate his high estimate of man. The fact that he died at the hands of his own people seems like the very negation of his faith, but the further fact that he thought it worthy so to die is overwhelming evidence that the essential and abiding value of human life was a cardinal element in his faith. He saw the good and the bad alike stamped with the image of the King.

Was he mistaken? His faith is slowly coming to its own. We see not all the things put under him, but we see Jesus crowned, and, seeing him, we have the earnest of a final vindication. By the idealism of his teaching and the tragedy of his untimely death he seemed to be alienating the people. On the contrary, he is drawing all men unto himself, and what Pilate said once in derision, or perhaps in the helplessness of his opportunist spirit, the world is saying with

ANTIPHONALS

clearer enunciation and in ever-ascending chorus:
"Behold the Man!"

A little child took ill on board ship recently, and the surgeon was unable to decide what action to take. By wireless he summoned another ship surgeon to his aid, and for three hours the two great ocean liners stood while the surgeons deliberated as to the proper diagnosis and the right course to pursue. One little child! A striking and dramatic rendering of all the quiet and patient efforts put forth by countless folk in behalf of little children in every Christian land! "Child welfare" is becoming a set phrase with us just now. If human life is of infinite worth, no effort must be spared to give it its chance at every stage in its development. Parenthood must be ennobled. Childhood must be honored. Home must be consecrated. Environment must be cleansed. Every school must become a school of expression that all the apparently conflicting powers lying dormant in man may be awakened and attuned to one another and become sympathetically and constructively operative in the service of his fellows.

The Church exists to proclaim this new valuation of man to the far ends of the earth. In the light of the teaching of its Founder and the inspiration of his sacrifice, it must never despair of anyone. John Newton, known as a slave trader and by courtesy a man, became so degenerate as to be a slave himself, responding only to the scorching whip of a negress. But the power of the gospel of Jesus found him, and he

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

who had sunk in the scale lower than any British subject ever did, found his way back to his native England, back to his manhood and self-respect, back to his God. He became a Christian and a poet, and every Sunday his hymns may be heard in the great cathedrals and churches of the land. So wonderful is the power of a divine idea to awaken the human soul, so tangible are the evidences that Jesus' appraisal of human life is the right one! He may deny his origin, but he can never wholly lose the recollection of it nor the power to come back. He may fall, but he can arise. He may mar the image of his Creator, but he cannot wholly efface it. He may wander from the fold, but so great is Heaven's valuation of him that the Good Shepherd will search through mountain, wilds, and foaming freshets until He find him.

Raphael's famous picture of Dante was lost. Years after a search was instituted and every clue faithfully followed. One day an old building was entered, the rubbish cleared away and the lime removed. Lo, and behold, the grave and noble lines of Dante's ascetic face appeared once more! So with man. He may wander far, but he will come to himself. He may be buried, but he will rise again. He may be lost, but he can be found.

XI

THE SOUL'S AWAKENING

"The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow."
—*P. B. Shelley.*

"She loved much." (Luke 7: 47.)
"Thy faith hath saved thee." (Luke 7: 50.)

FAITH has no fixed meaning in Scripture. At one time it takes the form of constancy, by virtue of which one does not forsake his God. It may mean regularity in attendance upon outward religious rites. It may consist in the conscious recognition of the principle of universal morality. In this sense it frequently becomes the ground for a prophet's arraignment of his people for their punctilious but empty observances of law and ceremony.

As a man's conception of himself, the world, and God becomes enriched, his faith becomes more profound. But profound or simple, faith is in essence always the same. The New Testament approaches most nearly to a definition of it, not in terms of its outward expression, but of its spiritual content. Faith in the gospel is represented as a right and proper frame of mind, as sincerity of purpose, as a trustful attitude of spirit.

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

There are different objects of faith with different degrees of value. No man or nation can be said to be wholly devoid of faith. The Athenians worshiped God in ignorance, and the function of the Christian Church is to declare the purpose and grace of God to all who feel after him if haply they may find him. It is man's nature to set up ideals, but if he is going to attain them he must have faith in them and in the possibility of realizing them. There is a sense in which a business man may be saved by his want of faith, inasmuch as bankruptcy and overconfidence frequently go hand in hand. Yet business is founded on faith in the public and their patronage; the drunkard has faith in the efficacy of strong drink, and the man of selfishness in the devices of his own contemptible soul.

It is not enough to say that one must have faith, or that one is saved through faith, without making clear to ourselves the character of the object or person toward whom our faith is directed. Faith, as we popularly use it, means faith in the highest object, and the New Testament expressly states not only that we must have faith, but that we must "have faith in God."

This woman to whom our texts refer had faith in a life of sin. But she changed her mind. She became dissatisfied with her past. In the presence of our Lord, she saw things in a new light. In the consciousness of utter failure, she came forward to declare her renunciation of her former mode of living and her whole-hearted devotion to the ideal of life

ANTIPHONALS

for which Jesus stood, which is but another way of saying her whole-hearted devotion to him. In changing the object of her faith she became a new creature.

With the sympathy and tenderness which he showed to the unfortunate and despised, Jesus accepts the tokens of her repentance. The onlookers took issue with him in his apparent lack of insight into the character of this woman. Truly the wisdom of God is often foolishness with men. The Jews had stoned many women less wicked than this poor sinner. They saw in her the naked fact that the way of the transgressor is hard. Jesus saw this fact, too, even more clearly than they, but he saw beyond it to the more significant fact of a penitent sinner in need of forgiveness, sympathy, and encouragement. His mission had special reference to such an one. He came into the world to teach that if God hates sin he loves the sinner with quenchless compassion. The complacent Pharisee dwelt upon the repulsive reality of sin. Jesus, whose heart was ever aflame with love to humanity, dwelt upon the positive fact of the soul itself, which, indeed, may have reveled in the ways of sin, but in origin is divine and therefore worthy of being restored.

Thus he reproves the unfeeling Pharisee and speaks words of comfort to the woman. In doing such like things he came to be stigmatized as the "Friend of Sinners," a title to which he pleaded guilty and in which we glory to-day. The permanence and universality of the Christian religion are founded on the fact that it does pairs of none. The true life is not the

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

exclusive privilege of a few. It is available for all. A woman degraded and despised found favor in his sight, and thus even we may hope to seek his pardon and enjoy his peace.

Faith alone saves from the power and consequences of sin. To be saved is to have safety, and safety calls up the idea of danger. We speak of safety only because there is danger lurking. He alone is safe who knows that he is in danger. Peter called for help when he began to sink. He was rescued once he became aware of his plight. This woman was saved through faith. Apart from this spiritual power which had become operative in her life, she was in danger—in danger of becoming hopelessly steeped in shame, of losing her power of responding to the beautiful and the good, of losing all sense of reverence for herself or for anyone else; in danger of atrophying her God-given powers of heart and soul until there would be nothing left to save. Recognizing the possibility of such a spiritual tragedy, we cannot be optimists in any superficial sense.

Wherein does our safety as a people consist to-day? Not in naval or military forces, much as we depended on these in the day of fierce trial; not in the progress of our trade and commerce, important as these may be; not even in our colleges and Churches. These, and the like of them, existed before, but have long since passed away with those who put their trust in them. The cloud-capped tower, the solemn temple,

ANTIPHONALS

the gorgeous palaces will fade away like an insubstantial pageant, leaving not a wrack behind.

Our safety consists in the faith that is cherished, warm and living, in the hearts of our people. Through faith in God we may be rich while accounted poor, and strong while apparently weak. Through the consciousness of God's abiding presence we may labor on from day to day and never weary. Through faith in God and in the possibility of knowing him the philosopher is enabled more and more adequately to resolve the problems that confront the human mind. Through faith in the rationality of the world in which God is forever expressing himself the scientist discovers nature's inviolable laws and makes the knowledge of them subservient to man's end. Through faith in his self-revealing character the historian devotes his years to the interpretation of the achievements of the past. Through faith in the transforming power of the love of God, the minister of religion makes the gospel his daily theme. In the face of ingratitude and positive hindrances, he finds scope for his deeds of mercy, and throughout the vicissitudes of a calling all too frequently looked upon with disfavor, he trusts the eternal law. Through faith in God men to-day live and love to seek the truth and make it manifest, and in every circumstance of life men and women are not wanting who find faith in the sustaining grace of an ever-present God, their only source of strength, comfort, and support. Through faith mountains have been removed which, to the unbelieving,

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

would have been absolutely immovable and insurmountable.

In explaining to his host why he had received this sinful woman, Jesus said it was because of her love. "She loved much." To the woman herself he said: "Thy faith hath saved thee." We have no faith in one who is unworthy of our love. We have faith in God and desire closer union with him because we love him. We love him because we find him worthy of our trust. One's life is affected but little by the mere knowledge that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen." Faith is, therefore, not a matter of intellectual certainty, but an attitude of the spirit, a vitalizing principle that transforms and renews the whole man.

This woman could not tell what faith was, but "she loved much." She saw the love of God in the look of sympathy and heard its accent in the words of grace and tenderness that proceeded from his mouth. When love became active, faith awoke. Love understands through what is seen and heard; faith lays hold of the unseen. Love is the condition of faith. Faith is inspired by love. Love discovers, faith appropriates. To believe in God is to prove him worthy of our affection. To love God is to trust him more firmly. Othello went mad, once he mistrusted Desdemona. When his faith faltered, his love became a destructive force. Here lies the secret of many a tragedy. Faith and love must, therefore, go hand in hand and remain forever the two inseparable aspects of a living and

ANTIPHONALS

redeeming religion, the twin pillars supporting our social edifice, the complementary forces guaranteeing the stability of the moral order, the two wings sustaining us in our moral ventures and spiritual outreachings, the two oars which in rhythmic harmony will bring us through the contrary winds of adversity and the bewildering storms of failure to the haven of our salvation at last.

While salvation, that great and wonderful gift, is a "free gift," yet it is not one to be arbitrarily bestowed. It is the normal condition of a faithful soul, the obvious state of that life whose nature it is to love. Jesus is accused of lack of discrimination in receiving and forgiving one who is a sinner. His answer to the charge is that it was the woman's own faith that saved her. "It is not an arbitrary gift of mine," he seems to say; "it is the necessary accompaniment of her own faith." She would still have to contend with many of her former practices and withstand the enticing words of her erstwhile companions; but knowing that in her heart she had peace, she would in the end bring her warfare to a successful issue. The still small Voice of tenderness and forgiving love that called this woman from the ways of sin to a life of purity, is appealing to every one of us that we may enlist in the service of the Master and adventure in his name. Shall we turn a deaf ear or shall we follow him right on to the close?

The fisher folk on the shore of the Adriatic have a beautiful custom. "When the boats have put out to

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

sea in the evening and are lying far out beside the nets, the wives and friends of the fishermen steal down to the seashore and sing the first verse of one of their favorite hymns. The music of their voices is carried far across the still waters till it reaches the fishermen at their work. Then the men take up the words of the second verse and back across the water steals the sound of the melody. And the women, hearing the echo of their own song, go home satisfied that their friends are safe." We, too, may rest secure in the protection of divine providence and in the assurance of the divine mercy, but only as we joyously and antiphonally respond to the Voice that speaks of a forgiveness that is full and free, and challenges us to a life that is redeemed by saving "faith" and enriched by "loving much."

Have faith in God, then, and he will give an infinite value to your otherwise poor and barren life; trust him and he will lead you to fountains of living water; love him, and he will fill your life with gifts rich and rare; let your mind be stayed on him and he will give you peace in the midst of the sorrow, the loneliness, and uncertainty of life: for the glorious Lord will be to you in place of broad rivers and streams wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

XII

A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

"Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for any purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die."
—*Tennyson, "Ulysses."*

HOMER's verse is said to have been written within such small compass that it could be literally contained in a nutshell. The parable of the Prodigal Son, or, more correctly, the parable of the Elder Brother, is systematic theology in a nutshell. There is involved in it a whole system of Christian thought in terms of human experience.

Suppose, for example, the impossible happened and that the New Testament were lost to the Christian world, with all the systems of theology based upon the study of it, and one fragment only were left to us in the form of this parable, how far could we go in recovering our lost treasure? A very long way, it is submitted. As the elements of the sun may be inferred from one white ray of light, as the ingredients of the ocean may be known from a tiny drop of salt water, so the great body of Christian thought, founded upon a careful study of our sacred writings on the one hand and upon a sympathetic analysis of our religious experiences on the other, could be very largely re-

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

covered through an intensive study of this one fragment of the Master's teaching.

1. The first question that theology faces is that of *the nature of God*. "To whom, then, will ye liken God," the prophet asks, "and what likeness will ye compare unto him?" Prophets and philosophers from time immemorial have sought to answer this question with, let us hope, a closer and closer approximation to the truth. They say, in effect, he is a Judge whom we should fear; he is a Master whom we should obey; he is a King whom we should serve; he is a Friend whom we should trust; he is a Spirit whom we should worship. These and other answers have been given with an element of truth contained in each one of them, and the character of the system of thought subsequently developed depends upon the answer making the strongest appeal.

But there is still another answer that may be given, a better and truer answer, quite familiar to us who are the heirs of all the ages, based upon a glimpse at this parable: he is a Father whom we should love. This is the Christian answer, one which would have been impossible in the days of Amos or Plato, and, as far as we can see, one which will never be superseded. If a human father, at his best, is the true representation of the nature and character of God, then we may safely infer his other attributes—his kindness, patience, sympathy—yes, and his grief and longing when his love has been rejected and his child has gone astray.

2. The second question is *the nature of man*. If we

ANTIPHONALS

generalize the statement that "the human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," we may be justified in saying with the Westminster divines that "he is opposed to all that is spiritually good, wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually." If this definition were not given of man, it might serve very accurately as a definition of the devil. There are others who take a more rosy and hopeful view. Theirs is the religion of the healthy minded, and they look upon man as nearer perfection now than at any time in the past. Man is God's "poem," noble and worthy. From the point of view of these people, there is no insuperable difficulty in accepting the divinity of Christ, for there is a spark of divinity in every one of us. Man is the true divinity.

Between these extremes there enters in an answer based not upon ethical presuppositions or personal prejudices, but upon human experience and the knowledge of things as they are. Man is neither wholly good nor wholly evil, although he has the possibilities of both lurking within his breast. He is free to realize the one or the other, and this freedom constitutes the most significant fact in his whole analysis. This gift is so distinctive and essential a part of him that God himself would not deprive him of it to prevent his ultimate destruction. "Give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me" is the challenging request, "and he divided unto them his living," is the ominous and emphatic reply.

The type of man God wants is not of the hothouse

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

variety, but one who is free to face the storms and catastrophes of the world. Some may "perish," but it is the storm that works toughness into trees and gianthood into men. Man is free to use or misuse his privileges. Liberty and license are not to be confounded. Liberty is realized in obedience to law. The younger son, in the misuse of his freedom, became a law unto himself. Man is, therefore, neither a saint nor a devil; he is a child of God, even if a wayward child, capable of being redeemed and worthy of being restored.

3. Every system of theology presupposes *the fall of man* and presents it in all its tragic colors with a view, apparently, of enhancing the redemptive provision made for his setting up again. Our whole architectonic scheme of Christian thought rests upon the doctrine of the fall necessitating all the subsequent gracious provisions for his restoration.

But according to our premise all our theology is lost and must be reconstructed from our parable. Has it anything to say on this question? It has this to say, that to turn away from the Father's loving and providential care is to fall. To turn one's back on God and his love is to fall. Wherever a man becomes a law unto himself and sets his will in opposition to the law of home and family, there is a fall. It is not necessary to put the responsibility on Adam or Eve or the serpent. Responsibility is inherent in our own wills, and there is no law of heredity or environ-

ANTIPHONALS

ment that can rob me of the joy of the Father's presence as long as I will to be loyal and true to him.

4. What, then, is *sin*? The question naturally emerges from a consideration of the foregoing. No system of theology can afford to ignore this question. "People are not worrying about their sins these days," Sir Oliver Lodge is reported to have said. His judgment is not confirmed by a study of modern literature. If there is one thing that stands out conspicuously in modern works of fiction, it is the fact of sin and its consequences in individual and social life. "Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God," so the catechism reads. "Sin is selfishness," so the brilliant R. J. Campbell declared in his "New Theology." These answers do not take us very far. They are too indefinite and abstract. To say that sin is selfishness gets us no further than to say that selfishness is sin, and the question, what is selfishness or what is sin, still remains unanswered. To say that it is the doing or not doing of something contrary to the law of God is to leave us to speculate concerning this law and our relation to it.

Let us turn to our parable and see in the concrete what sin really is. It is turning away from the Father's home. It is a condition of want, deprivation, and misery. Sin is plainly written on the face of him who spent his substance in riotous living, and still more on the face and in the accents of him who "was angry and would not go in." If it be true that the sum and substance of the Ten Commandments is

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

love to God and one's brother, it is equally true that sin is essentially to abandon God's purpose and to despise one's brother.

5. *Repentance* will occupy a prominent place in any system of thought that is going to do justice to the facts of our religious experience. If a man makes the wrong choice, he is not committed to that choice forever. He may reverse his decision. If a man gets on the wrong road, it is still possible for him to hear a voice that is never far away: "This is the way, walk ye in it." D. L. Moody did not spend much time discussing the theory of conversion, so busy was he creating the condition and proclaiming the evangel that made possible a "round-about face." His definition was based upon his own reading of Scripture and upon his immediate knowledge of the possibilities of the human will. In our parable we have a concrete example of repentance; it involves hatred of sin and a turning away from the sinful life. It includes a definite act of will, a resolution, "I will arise and go." Even before this heroic resolution took shape it included the prodigal's coming to himself. To live in sin is to live beneath one's true self.

Thus we see that from a study of this parable a worthier statement of the doctrine of penitence and conversion than is sometimes proclaimed from evangelical pulpits may be made. There is no reference to an emotional tragedy supposed to be an essential of conversion. All people are not emotional, nor does the grace of God always come by way of the emotions.

ANTIPHONALS

Peter's conversion was gradual, Paul's was cataclysmic, both were genuine and involved turning from Judaism to Christianity—a very different situation from that in which young people reared in a Christian atmosphere find themselves. Every convert is not necessarily a prodigal; he may be an elder brother, stodgy, methodical, and dutiful, and his restoration a far greater triumph of the grace of God than the return of the prodigal. One thing is definite: no one is going to drift into spiritual elevation. He is going to make a definite decision in the matter of his relation to virtue and love. He is going to give God a recognized place, and when he does he is on the royal road to a new life.

6. A brief reference to two other doctrines of the Christian faith will be sufficient to establish the thesis with which we started, *the forgiveness of sins* which we profess whenever we repeat the Apostles' Creed and prayer, which is at the heart of every religion, Christian and pagan. There is a fatalism which is a virtual denial of forgiveness—things are as bad as they can be, and there is no use in trying to mend them. And there is an optimism which treats sin in so light a vein as to make forgiveness quite an unnecessary procedure. Can God forgive one who is himself not of the forgiving spirit or who has no consciousness of sin, grievous indeed as his sins may be? If he cannot, then what does forgiveness involve? For one thing, it does not involve the undoing of the wrong nor the removal of the baneful effects of a sinful career. "It is by no breath, turn of

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

eye, wave of hand that salvation joins issue with death." There is no power human or divine that can restore the sinner to his original condition, but it can and will give him the mastery so that he and not the powers of sin will henceforth be in command. It will make possible the setting in of healing processes in the wounds that sin has caused, though scars will still remain. Great as is our hope, founded upon the free, unmerited favor of God, yet forgiveness even at his hands is but second best, and the ideal life in whose sacrificial love we find hope is one that had in it nothing to be forgiven.

But here is forgiveness at work. The cry of the prodigal is heard before it is half uttered. Love meets him more than halfway. It bestows upon him every token of acceptance, rings and robes and a day of feasting and rejoicing. Divine forgiveness can go no farther. We are told that there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. This fact is vividly set before us in the music and dancing and other evidences of rejoicing when a wayward son has found his way home. This is forgiveness in terms of experience, and it comes about in response to the prayer of the penitent.

7. *Prayer* is a universal religious phenomenon. Wherever there is the consciousness of human need and of the existence of a divine order, there is the spiritual commerce known to us as prayer. It brings the resources of the eternal world to bear upon the daily needs of sinful men. Prayer is at heart fellowship

ANTIPHONALS

between man and God—man in the full consciousness of his need, and God in the full consciousness of his ability to meet that need. Man, knowing that he has made a failure of his life or will make it unless heart and will be reënforced from above, pours out his soul before God if perchance he may find acceptance and favor. This is prayer. A certain form of words may be of great service, as in the case of the Lord's Prayer, but it is quite possible to lose the spirit in the words which are no longer the free and spontaneous utterances of him who uses them. "Lord, remember me," is the brief and pointed prayer of the thief on the cross. "Lord, have mercy upon my son," is the earnest entreaty of an anxious father. "Be merciful to me a sinner," is the plea of every penitent soul.

Here is the spirit of prayer in our parable: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." All the essentials of prayer are here. There are confession, humility, supplication, and faith. Prayer in its simplest terms is speaking with God out of the realization of our need and in the confidence that he will not cast us off forever.

Here, then, are the seven cardinal doctrines from which a whole system of Christian theology might very well be deduced: the divine likeness, human nature, the fall of man, the effect of sin, the meaning of conversion, the reality of forgiveness, and the essence of prayer. "Give me one bone," says the scientist, "and I can reconstruct the whole skeleton."

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

"Give me the flower in the crannied wall," says the poet, "and I shall know both what God and man is." "Give me the parable of the Elder Brother, and from it alone," says the student of religion, "I can deduce the main features of our whole system of theology." Religion in action is the only vital religion. Theology as vindicated in experience has an authority no speculative production could have, however consistent the development and however profound the thought.

There is value in moving from one field to another, but there is undoubted reward in the intensive cultivation of a limited area; for, to our surprise, we may find that, like the philosopher's garden, narrow and circumscribed as it seems, it is very deep and very high, reaching even to heaven. It is not otherwise in the intensive study of the parable of the Elder Brother.

XIII

THE MEETING OF THE STREAMS

"He who knows not the way leading to the sea, should make the river his companion."—*Plautus*, "*Pænulus*."

REPRESENTATIVES of all the distinctive classes in human society meet at the celebration of the first Christmas. The educated and the uneducated are there, the idealist and the man of affairs; the man of speculative bent is at one with him of devout and humble spirit. Whatever the differences—vocational, social, temperamental—they have religious hopes and spiritual aspirations in common which bring them one and all to the cradle of the Christ.

The man of practical mind looks without and regards the sphere of human achievement as his field of legitimate inquiry. Can he find God there? The philosopher carries his researches into the realm of the inner life. He is in search of first principles or, as the theologian would say, in search of God. Can he find him there? The man of devotional spirit looks above and lifts his soul in adoration and worship. Through these forms and aspirations can he find God? The answer to their quest demands a living and concrete ideal, and they find it in the Babe of Bethlehem.

To whom does God most surely communicate his messages of divine truth, if not to those who do their duty with respect to the practical and necessary work

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

of life? The world needs men of action, and God approves them by giving them fresh visions of himself. To Moses at his work in the fields of Midian comes the call to lead his people and to lay for them the basis of an enduring civilization. "He took me from the sheepcote and from following the sheep," sang David, who became for his people the type of the ideal king. "I was not a prophet nor the son of a prophet," declares Amos in his self-defense, "but a herdsman from Tekoa and a keeper of sycamore trees." It may be that the quiet and subtle influences of the fields and open prairies constitute for a certain type of mind a more effective course of training for religious ministry than high honors in rabbinical lore. The mountains have a way of speaking to the human spirit in terms of majesty and spiritual elevation. The stars also have a message for those who give themselves time to contemplate the nightly glory of the heavens. The shepherd knows the meaning of "the secret whispers" with which nature and the spiritual world speak to him.

"Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;
His daily teachers were the woods and rills,
The silence that is in the starry skies,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

There is nothing haphazard, therefore, in the fact that the accents of the Christmas song were caught up first of all by the shepherds in the plains of Judah. "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by

ANTIPHONALS

night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid." They made their way into the presence of the Christ-Child, and the angelic song of peace with which they heralded his coming has reverberated through the centuries, and the spirit of it, we may say with some confidence, is nearer a practical and universal acceptance than at any time in the history of the world. What men failed to do at Versailles they were able to accomplish at Locarno, because the nations are learning by a long and costly experience that what cannot be done by outward force may permanently be achieved by a spirit of concession and mutual understanding.

But there is a second group of men challenging our attention to-day. They are travelers from a distant country. They are reflective in their manner, speculative in their mental outlook, and generally betray the aspect and attitude of the student. The thin hand, the pale face, the far-away look in the eye—all speak of them as men of contemplation and repose. The world needs these men. There can be little progress apart from those engaged in the task of widening our fields of knowledge, extending the borders of our inquiry, faithful seekers after truth who come back to us now and then to announce their discovery—a fresh ray of light, a new aspect of truth, an original revelation of God. Our complex, practical problems eventually find solution in the light of the achievements of the men of thought. The man who gives himself to the

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

contemplation of God, freedom, and immortality may seem to stand aloof from life and its concerns. Not so. When Copernicus upset the Ptolemaic theory of the earth, he made possible many a concrete discovery. When Immanuel Kant discoursed on *a priori* ideas within college walls, he stimulated by his critical inquiries into pure and practical reason a new conception of history, literature, and philosophy.

The man of action whom Carlyle admires is not at variance with the man of thought whom Emerson approves. The one would find his ideal in a Frederick the Great, the man of military prowess, the other in a Plato, the man of speculative inquiry. The final word from both types of men must clothe itself in flesh and blood. Personality is the final answer to the soul's quest for reality. Thus the wise men from the East salute the shepherds from the plains as they approach from different directions and meet together at the cradle of the Christ. "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

There is one more class represented among those who pay homage to him who is born King of the Jews, those of devout and prayerful spirit. In our cynical moments we speak of the men who pay and the men who pray. Both types are needed. The men who pay have their feet on solid earth, but the men who pray have their hearts open to the spiritual influences that

ANTIPHONALS

come to those who live as seeing Him who is invisible. The ideals that lift us above the plane of common things are nourished in an atmosphere of piety and reverence. Simeon is the aged and highly honored representative of this class. He should have died long since but for a great hope that sustained him and a mighty faith that revealed to him the secrets of perpetual youth. A religion without hope is like an altar without fire. Simeon kept the fire burning and did his part in making possible the realization of his dream. As the glory of the new day shone upon him, he proceeds to bless all and sundry. He blesses parents and child, God and man, so overflowing with the spirit of thanksgiving is his soul. "And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

Christmas is preëminently the season of childhood, and happy is the home that has in it boys and girls to mingle in the excitement and joy and gift-making of the festive season. But people of Simeon's age and temperament also have a stake in Christmas. They have an intense sympathy with youth and are never as happy as when they hold the promises of the greater and better future in their arms. They are themselves

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

young in spirit. Whoever, therefore, is to be forgotten at this time, let it not be the dear fathers and mothers who loved us into life and who from our earliest days have showered upon us all of forgiveness and charity that will make their memory forever fragrant. In the kindest and tenderest way, think of them now, for when they will have gone from us Christmas will permanently lose for us much of its attractiveness and charm.

Simeon the just and devout and Anna the prophetess of fourscore and four years have, therefore, a place with the shepherds and the wise men not far from the holy child Jesus. Simeon, the man of quiet devotion; the Magi, the men of thought and speculative inquiry, together with the shepherds; the men on duty in the midst of the complex interests of life—these all find a common center, a common object of devotion, a common ideal in the spirit of childhood and in the power and potencies of personality, human and divine. Here God is forever revealing himself and making it possible for us to make departures in all the directions of our human endeavor. Every child that is born is a fresh revelation of the divine love, and, like all the gifts and graces of divine revelation, the spirit of the Christmas time must be universalized.

In the province of Quebec there is a place where three streams meet and mingle their clear and sparkling waters with those of the St. Lawrence, and in this great river they course their way together as they flow down the Gulf to make their contribution to the

ANTIPHONALS

fullness of the mighty Atlantic. In the province of human experience three great streams meet—the practical, the speculative, and the devout—and together make their way to the boundless ocean of divine love, a love made accessible and brought near by the life and ministry of One whose birth we celebrate at this beautiful Christmas season.

XIV

HELP !

"I am not of that feather to shake off
My friend when he must need me. I do know him
A gentleman that well deserves a help:
Which he shall have."

—*Shakespeare, "Timon of Athens."*

WHEN I was a small boy on the farm we had a dog named "Help." He was of medium size, with short, white hair and a black spot over the left eye. He could boast no pedigree and therefore could win no prizes at the National Exhibition. He had a habit of getting into trouble whenever he went on a journey, so we tried to keep him at home. Other dogs disputed his right to the king's highway, very unfairly, so it seemed to me. The reason for those unpleasant encounters it may not be easy to ascertain, but my suspicion is that the black spot over the left eye had much to do with it. It gave the suggestion of a cynical look and produced the same effect as a chip on a boy's shoulder.

But this white-haired dog, notwithstanding his pedigree and his black spot, was all that a dog should be in the matter of service. If a tramp happened along he raised an alarm; he announced the return of the woodsmen in time to prepare a cup of tea; the men coming in from the field were heralded by an advance

ANTIPHONALS

agent; when milking time drew near he became restive until he and I marched off together for the cows. To "Tonald or me and another dog" this task was ordinarily assigned. "Help" had no wrist watch in those early years and could not have used it if he had had it, but something told him—perhaps the lengthening shadows on the ground or the sudden quietness that had overtaken our noisy rooster—that evening was fast approaching. He did most of the running when running had to be done, and most of the barking as well. When the time came to bring home the sheep, he was on hand, or, speaking more correctly, on all fours. He would leap and yelp by way of indicating that something exciting was up, and dash in this direction and that until we managed to get the "silly sheep" moving homeward. Generally he did everything a dog could do to make himself useful and justify his existence.

Some people have pleasant-sounding names who themselves are not pleasant people. In the end they spoil the names for us because of their associations. But I have always liked this name, "Help." It is one of the earliest English words in my vocabulary, one of the useful words that preceded the classical array so difficult for the unyielding Highland tongue to articulate: "dock (dog), cat, hen, pick (pig), tup (tub), fly." I have been prejudiced in favor of the word all these years, preferring it to bigger and more euphonious words that proffer their services: support, relief, succor, coöperative effort, "temporary assistance for

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

extraordinary occasions," as J. R. Lowell puts it. These all mean about the same thing, but they take longer to say, much longer to write, and as for me I prefer this homely Anglo-Saxon word "help," with its quaint past participle "holpen" ("they shall be holpen with a little help")—all because this frisky, friendly, and ever-willing dog had carried the name. He was true to his name and gave of his best on every possible occasion.

I was reading Ruskin's "Modern Painters" this year, and there renewed my acquaintance with the author's chapter on "The Law of Help." Apparently there is such a thing as a law of help, and John Ruskin, who was himself an artist of some standing and, still more, a keen and penetrating interpreter of art, says that this law is at work in every painting. Who or what is it that needs help in a beautiful portrait? All the colors that compose it. And who is it that gives this help? All the other colors. Each one is striving to do its part and at the same time to help all the other colors to do theirs in bringing out the beauty and truth of the whole. Each color is dependent on every other color doing its utmost, as in a hockey team every player needs the backing of every other player if the whole team is to excel. There is teamwork in the world of art, as there must be in the great world of nature—forest and field and sky and "human face divine," from which all art derives its inspiration. Here is the way Ruskin defines this "Law of Help": "In true composition, everything else not only helps

ANTIPHONALS

everything else a little, but helps it with its utmost power. Every atom is full of energy. Not a line, not a speck of color but is doing its very best and that best is aid."

Last week I was lecturing on Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." Looking over in advance the slides used to illustrate this lecture, my attention was arrested by a figure in the picture of "The Slough of Despond" which I did not recognize. Christian, having set out on his spiritual pilgrimage, suddenly fell into a bog where, with the burden of his sin still on his back, he began to sink. Pliable, who had accompanied him while the traveling was good, began to taunt him and finally turned back, leaving him to his fate. This picture of mine, however, had two people in it, and for the moment I could not recall who the second man was. Looking up the famous allegory again, I found, of course, that the other man was "*Help*." He it was who came to Christian in his distress and spoke the word he needed most: "Give me thine hand." How welcome this word must have been! "So," Bunyan says, "he gave him his hand, and he drew him out and set him upon sound ground, and bade him go on his way."

Christian had a wonderfully varied experience. Notwithstanding his "clambering" over Hill Difficulty, his terror at the lions and his fight with Apollyon, he was able in the end to arrive safely in that land where the beauty of the flowers and the chorus of birds added to the joy of living. But he would never

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

have left the Slough of Despond save for this man Help, whom I was unable for the moment to recognize. He was a friend in need. He had probably tumbled into the same place himself and been "holpen" out by some other pilgrim. He wished to do for others what others had done for him.

"Yes, Bunyan's book is very much alive," says Rev. L. P. Jacks, LL.D., in his sermon on "Grace Abounding." "But I have yet to mention what I think is the most lively part of it. That is the title itself, which is the liveliest thing about 'Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners.' What did Bunyan mean by 'Grace'? Well, he meant the Spirit of Help which attends the weak and tempted children of God, which is always there by their side on the difficult journey of life. God is always ready to help them to play the man. That is what Bunyan meant by Grace. He thought of Grace as a great ocean of strength, always ready to flow into any man who was worthy of it. It is quite true, and here the Bishop of Durham is right, that Bunyan had a narrow notion of the channel through which this grace came, through which this spirit of helpfulness flowed in upon human life. Bunyan thought there was only one channel. There are millions and millions of channels. But Bunyan saw the amplitude of the ocean itself. He saw the reality of it, the generosity of it, the depth of it, an unfathomable ocean of strength spread throughout the length and breadth of the whole universe, without bottom and without shore. Bunyan saw that, he saw God's

ANTIHPONALS

help ready on that tremendous scale; and that is what he meant by 'grace abounding to the chief of sinners,' and abounding, he might have added, for everybody else as well, including the chief of sinners. But he did not say that, and there again, I grant you, he is shallow. But he was broad enough in saying that grace does abound, that help is infinite, that the spirit of Help ever waits on us, is always there, and strong with the strength of the whole universe. We do get help in this life, do we not? Don't you believe that? We do get help, and the help comes from that infinite ocean, 'Grace abounding.' Does that mean anything to you? If it means nothing to you, then let me speak rather plainly. Unless we have realized that this universe in which we live does abound in grace, in help, does abound in strength available for us weak and tempted children, does lend itself to us and back us up whenever we are worthy of it—unless we have realized that, then let me tell you that, whether you call yourself Unitarian or anything else, you know nothing whatever about the Christian religion."

This is Bunyan's way of defining "The Law of Help" which Ruskin recognized in the world of art; which Stradivarius recognized in his workshop, "Stradivarius helping God to make good violins"; which Cicero conceived to be a part of the moral law—"This is our special duty that if anyone specially needs our help we should give him such help to the utmost of our power"—and which he and Stradivarius and Ruskin and Bunyan and Browning and other

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

great souls found operating in the world of human experience; God using us to help each other so, lending our minds out.

In view of these experiences I took the trouble to go to our textbook to see what place this word had there, and, to my surprise, I found that it appeared over two hundred times; that, indeed, it is the Bible's favorite name for God. In the Psalms he is known by this name more than by any other, and the bitterest disappointment in the hearts of the prophets came when they found their people turning to the idolatrous religions of the nations and not to him who alone was able to help them. Listen to these importunities based upon the religious experience of centuries: "Praise him for the help of his countenance." "Thou hast been my help, leave me not, nor forsake me, O God of my salvation." "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee, send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion."

"O Israel, trust thou in the Lord:
He is their help and their shield.
O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord:
He is their help and their shield."

This is, indeed, to say that "God's help is better than early rising and nearer than the door." The greatest affirmation of the religious life and the ever-recurring refrain of the faithful is this: that help and deliverance come to us from God, that every act of worship, every spiritual longing, every token of fellowship with the Divine means fresh accessions of life and

ANTIPHONALS

energy sending us on our way. The most significant thing about a Church is not the work her people do or the money they raise, however necessary these may be, but her ability to "send help from the sanctuary" and to give comfort and inspiration to people as they face the responsibilities, perplexities, and tragedies of daily living. If the Church fails at this point, she fails everywhere. Religion is not a load, but a lift; not a joy killer, but a joy giver; not a wall to shut us in, but a door that lets us out; not a chasm that divides us, but a bridge to carry us over.

There is a cynicism allied with the organized forces of the underworld which points the finger of scorn at some of our best Christian workers to-day and says: "Uplifters." To be an uplifter is for them anathema. When the Christian Church loses its passion for the souls of men and the power of uplifting, its reason for being will have passed, and the story of the Good Samaritan will be handed on to some other institution still able to serve in its spirit.

A recent writer puts the matter this way: "Religion is in essence the quest for power, the power which saves us from ourselves and from the world, and makes us, out of weakness, strong. Religion gives strength before it gives meaning or advice. A man's religion is that from which he draws power for living." This is putting the case for religion in a practical way, a recognition of the fact that God is able to help all poor souls lost in the dark. But is there any better way of

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

expressing this than in the classical words familiar to all of us:

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,
From whence cometh my help;
My help cometh from the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.”

This is the reverent and grateful acknowledgment of the human soul with respect to the divine source from which its inspiration and power have always come.

The doctrine of *the Holy Spirit* is our way of saying that God will not let us down or leave us to ourselves in our aspirations toward higher things. The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. *Prayer*, the noblest action of the human soul and the clue to its enduring life, the spiritual process whereby faith finds access to the inexhaustible resources of our inheritance in Christ, is man's endeavor after forgiveness and strength and new obedience. Let us, therefore, come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. *The missionary enterprise*, which saves us from parochialism by keeping us in sympathetic contact with the universal elements and the inescapable obligations inherent in our faith, is but the Church's answer to the cry, wafted to us over the seven seas, of those who are still in spiritual destitution: “Come over and help us!”

Have you noticed how in the early Church there were, not minister and people merely, but various groups of people disposed according to their several abilities? “And God hath set some in the Church,

ANTIHPONALS

first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers, then miracles, the gifts of healing, helps." Stop there! "Helps." Why not go on to "governments and diverse kinds of tongues"? Because we have enough of those already, too much, maybe. But there is room for a new order; one that stands ready to give help wherever it may be needed; one that seeks to invigorate and tone up every existing organization, that it may function to the limit of its capacity; one that will befriend the stranger, cheer the timid, and give a helping hand to every weary traveler in life's pilgrimage.

"Helps?" Yes, helps. These "helps" of New Testament times may have been the beginning of the Deacons' Court or the Willing Workers or the Ladies' Aid of later times, the Shining Ones who stepped forward and said, "We shall be glad to help," when important ministries were required, not provided for in the constitution or given a place on the agenda. Can we without ceremony, by an act of will, join up with this order and be among its active and devoted members? In this way we may become good scouts doing a good turn every day, and our prayer for God's continued favor and presence will become more real and have better prospect of being answered:

"Thou, who hast made my home of life so pleasant,
Leave not its tenant when its walls decay;
O Love Divine, O Helper ever present,
Be Thou my strength and stay!"

Among the many wise and good words that have

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

come to us from Pliny the Elder, none is more suggestive of the Christian faith than this:

"Deus est mortali juvare mortalem,
Et haec ad aeternam gloriam via."
It is godlike for mortal to help mortal,
And this is the way to eternal glory.

XV

THE CONTAGION OF HEALTH

"The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch Him in life's throng and press
And we are whole again."

—*J. G. Whittier.*

ROBERT INGERSOLL propounded this question once: "If there be a benevolent Deity, as Christians say there is, why did he not make health contagious and not disease?" It is a question that cannot be disposed of with a wave of the hand. It is but a part of a larger question that arises in connection with all the natural catastrophes that overtake the earth and its inhabitants—famine and pestilence, fire and earthquake. The pessimist finds here his favorite themes, and he paints in vivid colors. We do not shut our eyes to the existence of these phenomena nor to the circumstances of special need created by them. Neither do we claim that it is an easy matter to reconcile these conditions with our belief as to the nature of God.

Admitting the difficulty, we claim that a real world cannot be one-sided. It calls for conditions which make it possible to have day and night, storm and calm, health and disease, good and evil, pain and pleasure, life and death. These are correlative terms. It is not enough to say the one is real, the other

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

unreal; the one is of God, the other of the devil. That is too easy an explanation; it simply pushes the difficulty back one step and leaves us face to face with the question as to how the devil came to have any hand in the making of the world or in the framing of its constitution. To accept an explanation like that is to acquiesce in a dualistic philosophy which creates more difficulties than it resolves.

Let us assume that Mr. Ingersoll's proposal is carried into effect. What will be the outcome? The element of restraint which at the present time is no small factor in maintaining health and order will be lost sight of. The laws of life may be disregarded with impunity. The obligation to live a moral life will no longer exist. By disregarding the laws of man and God health may be impaired to-day, but by rubbing shoulders with a healthy man normal conditions may be restored to-morrow. This gives promise of a much improved world. All disease would be banished. One healthy man would restore good health to the whole population of a hospital. But the deterrent effect of the present situation would be lost sight of. The bottom would be knocked out of a morally ordered world, health would be had so easily that few would live in accordance with its laws, and the time would soon arrive when no one could be found from whom health would be caught. Every man would have depended on Ingersoll's new regulation, with the result that physical and moral health would be banished from the earth, humanity would be thrown back into moral

ANTIHPONALS

chaos, and our faith in a benevolent Deity hopelessly destroyed.

This world is one, and when we reverse its physical laws we must also reverse its moral and spiritual laws; and to do this requires greater reorganization than Mr. Ingersoll counted on, and, in any case, it would give us an infinitely poorer world than we now have.

But in a deeper sense than that conceived of by Mr. Ingersoll and those who think like him, health is contagious, and more contagious than disease. When a doctor comes into the home, people don't want a sickly, gloomy, despondent man. They want a man who is himself the embodiment of the health which he stands to maintain. The kindness, cheerfulness, and general hopefulness that characterize him naturally take hold of them, and without taking into consideration the medical means to which he may resort he leaves them in a healthier state mentally and physically than he found them. Half a dozen calls from a man who lives a wholesome life and reflects it in his expression and conversation is in itself a large element in the restoration of health.

There is a higher point of view from which we may look at the question. Here is a missionary who is willing to share all the dangers and deprivations of paganism in the South Sea Islands.* The conditions are hard. His co-laborers are slain. The greed of

*The Canadian Presbyterian Church recently celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the birth of John Geddie, to whom this statement applies.

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

civilized men combines with the cruelty of cannibals to make progress difficult. Diseases peculiar to civilization are introduced—measles, diphtheria, and drunkenness—and contagion does its work with a vengeance. But in quietness and confidence is his strength. He labors on with the result that his religion transforms the whole people. At last he dies, and men write of him that “when he came to this island there were no Christians; when he left there were no heathen.”

Now, how came it that the inhabitants of a whole island became civilized and Christianized in the course of one or two generations? What brought it about? There was only one man who had the germ of the Christian faith, and the whole population must have caught it from him. It did not descend from above, and it did not ascend from the depths. It came in the form of a noble, heroic missionary who propagated his faith and communicated his religion to others.

Henry M. Stanley speaks of the influence of Dr. Livingstone upon him. Finding him in the heart of Africa and living in his companionship for a few days, he says it would be impossible not to believe in the Christ who was ever present with him. His very countenance was a benediction. His religion was catching. His faith was communicative. It left its permanent impression on Stanley. Yes, and it left its permanent impression on Africa and the whole Christian Church.

ANTIPHONALS

The predominance of health over disease is seen especially in the case of Jesus. Take three instances: one in regard to the disciples, one in regard to the leper, and one in regard to the woman with an issue of blood. The disciples had false ideas about many things: the kingdom, religion, greatness, service, righteousness. Jesus spoke of the kingdom as spiritual and inward; he taught that greatness consists in service, that religion and righteousness are not forms and ceremonies, but an attitude of mind. Which of these ideas will prevail? Jesus on the one hand, and on the other twelve disciples and a body of public opinion in line with that for which they stood. The odds are all in favor of the materialistic conceptions of the disciples, and yet Jesus prevails. They did not bring him round to their point of view. He led them to learn his way. They did not drag him down to their plane; instead he lifted them and he is lifting the world up to his.

The same matter appears in a more striking and dramatic form in the meeting of Jesus and the leper. The leper is the embodiment of disease and loathsomeness, so much so that he was shunned by everybody, and that he himself was taught to cry out to anyone who came near, "Unclean, unclean!" Jesus disregards the custom. His pity for the helpless and needy is greater than his fear for his own safety. He is the embodiment of cleanliness and health. The two meet and touch. And with what result? He who embodies

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

health prevails. Instead of his becoming a leper, the leper becomes a whole man!

The woman with an issue of blood is another case in point. She comes from behind and touches the hem of his garment. She had wasted her substance on superstitious and unscientific physicians. "She was healed immediately," is the plain and dramatic rendering of Scripture. Virtue went out from him which made her whole. Virtue went out from him to her, to the leper, to the disciples, and to all who have ever had any dealings with him. If no one has caught the Christian religion from us, our faith cannot be of a high order. Dr. J. H. Jowett speaks of the messenger of Christ as one who "seeks to transform the touch which carries an ill contagion into a touch which shall be the vehicle of contagious health." Christianity would never have spread as it did in the early centuries but for this Christian principle which made every believer a disseminator of the truth he had received.

"Pliny when governor of Pontus wrote to Emperor Trajan to ask advice in the matter of dealing with the Christians. . . . He proceeded to put two women to the torture, but discovered nothing beyond a bad and excessive superstition, *the contagion of which had spread through village and country till the temples were emptied of worshippers.*" This is what made Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire. This same principle in operation to-day makes the man of wholesome life prevail, the man of pure ideas strong, the man of faith dominant. — I am surprised that of all the men who

ANTIPHONALS

have gone out into heathendom none of them has been overcome by the prevailing religion. Is it not strange that once in a while we do not hear of a missionary turning Buddhist or Mohammedan or Confucian? We know the weaknesses of human nature, we know something of the strength and tenacity of pagan religions, and yet we can hardly quote an instance where the Christian missionary yielded to the faith of those to whom he was sent. On the contrary, the triumphal march of the missionary cause is but one continuous illustration of how wholesome ideas of God, man, and the world must ultimately triumph.

In Browning's "Pippa Passes" there is an account of a poor Italian girl working in a silk factory. She has her one holiday on New Year's Day. Unable to associate with those who enjoy the good things of life, she sings her favorite songs as she wanders along the highway. At night she returns home feeling that she has not had a good holiday, never realizing that her unconscious influence had been the determining factor in the life of every one who had heard her song, and that the healthy contagion which she radiated had softened hard hearts, strengthened weak wills, converted revenge into manly sympathy, and cruel intent into Christian charity.

It is significant that the terms by which we try to explain to ourselves the nature of God are those that suggest diffusiveness and self-communication. When we say that God is Spirit, we deny that he can be isolated or self-contained; when we say that he is

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

Light, we predicate life and health-giving power of him; when we say that he is Love, we declare that it is of his very nature to come into personal touch with each of us and to make us partakers of the saving health of the Lord.

Our faith as Christians is founded on and confirmed by the presence of Jesus in human life. We hail him as the Sun of Righteousness that comes with healing in his wings, we welcome him as the embodiment of the spirit of truth, and we rejoice in his loving compassion that reaches out to the farthest limits. In so far as men have been touched by his spirit, they become distributing centers of that which is wholesome and pure. "Our first responsibility as Christians is to minister with our own hands to the necessities of those about us, to speak with our own lips the words of cheer and the message of life eternal, to shed from our own persons those gracious influences which are life and health to the weak and weary."

Philology proves little, but it is not without significance that "health" and "holiness" come from a common Anglo-Saxon root, *hal*, to be whole. Wholeness, holiness is the most contagious thing in the world. It ever sheds the radiance of a noble life, just as a flower is steadily bestowing fragrance upon the air. It is in the light of such a truth that advice like this finds meaning: "If anywhere within your reach there is a man of firm faith and a man like Tennyson's friend who fought his doubts and gathered strength, one who has faced the specters of the mind and laid them, one

ANTIPHONALS

whose faith is refreshing and *contagious*, one who knows how to prove that the soul has reasons which Reason cannot know, go to that friend, that teacher, and say: 'Help thou mine unbelief.'" Apart from this conception, how otherwise could we understand the confidence betrayed in this statement: "There is nothing the man of God should not touch and everything he touches should be better for it. He should be like the sunlight bringing healing and blessing wherever he comes"?

How, otherwise, could Dickens say that "among men who have any sound and sterling qualities there is nothing so contagious as pure openness of heart"? As a result of a brief inquiry, therefore, we see that health is contagious and holiness essentially self-communicative; our faith in Jesus as the Revealer of the Father is confirmed, and our belief in God as a benevolent Deity more firmly established. Upon a low plane an ill contagion may still exist, but it is only when we have done the things we should not have done and have left undone the things we ought to have done that there is no health in us.

XVI

THE SIN OF THE SHORT CUT

"That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:

This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it."

—Robert Browning, "*A Grammarian's Funeral*."

THE sin of the intemperate man is the sin of the short cut. He patronizes the saloon, not to oblige the keeper or to spend his money, not to blight his future and degrade his family. These things follow as a matter of course. They are but stages in the history of every drunkard. But his aim is to satisfy his desire, to forget his troubles, and by the shortest possible route to attain to that state of pleasurable enjoyment which his nature seems to demand. He wants pleasure "quick," and strong drink makes the largest and loudest promises. It promises joy and exhilaration and freedom from the sense and burden of responsibility, and without further question he yields to sin in one of its most deceitful forms.

The saloon never fulfills its promises. It is the solution of no problem. It is the retreat of the weakling and the haven of the moral coward. The true man shirks no responsibility. He finds joy in the fact of life and its achievements, his delight is in work well done, and in overcoming obstacles and bearing legitimate burdens he finds abounding satisfaction.

ANTIPHONALS

Pleasure is not an end worth living for. Even if it were, the intemperate man is seeking it in a wrong direction. It comes not when directly sought, but as the accompaniment of virtue and as the sense of duty done. In sacrifice and self-restraint, man finds pleasure and satisfaction which self-indulgence could never give.

But this is also the sin of the liquor dealer. He is said to be the creature of our desires, and appears in the community in obedience to the economic law of supply and demand. His aim is not to make drunkards or break homes. He has no desire to fill the jails with criminals, or premature graves with the spoils of his unholy trade. These are the irritating and petty incidents which he would remove if he could.

What, then, is his aim? It is to get money "quick." The ordinary processes of business are too slow for him. The margin of profit is so small and the amount paid in wages so large that he would waste half a lifetime making a fortune in other lines, whereas in the liquor business he can do it in a few years. Thus he finds himself traveling the same road with his patrons, and their common sin is the sin of the short cut.

Money is not an end in life. It is in reality a form of pleasure, and when the methods we adopt or the traffic we engage in contradicts the very purpose of our existence, we are in a sorry plight indeed. The abiding result of a man's work is the life that he makes. The loom of life is ever active, and our thoughts, methods, and business ideals are all taken up into the warp

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

and woof of the character we form. The man who misrepresents goods that he may make inordinate profits, and the Church that advertises "euchre" and "dance" in aid of a building fund are in the same business with the saloon keeper—that of getting money without going through the normal and legitimate process.

The man who would be most surprised, however, to find himself in the company of both the drunkard and the liquor dealer is the impetuous reformer. He is in dead earnest about temperance, and, without regard to the conditions or the prevailing opinion, he wants the ideal at one stroke. He works frantically for the transformation of society and the removal of deep-seated desires. All this is to be done in a day, for his faith in the adoption of a certain platform and in the passing of a bit of legislation knows no bounds. He fails to get the response looked for, and he begins to lose heart. The result is that he injures the cause he espouses and falls back into the ranks of the thousands of respectable and inactive citizens who cherish the same faith with himself, but who are of no service to the cause of reform. They blame the government for not being sufficiently progressive, or the liquor party for being too aggressive, or the drunkard for being so easily deceived, without ever suspecting that they themselves are the most deceived and the most blameworthy of all. They want reform "quick," but they are not ready to pay the price in time, labor, and sacrifice.

ANTIPHONALS

The drunkard wants his pleasure, the "publican" his money, the citizen his reform, and they all want it by way of the hazardous, steep, and fatal short cut to the ideal!

These are the words of a sane and fearless statesman in his last message to the United States Congress, and while they were used in another connection, they apply here: "We do not for a moment believe that the problem will be solved in any short and easy method. The solution will come only by pressing various concurrent remedies. Some of these remedies lie outside the domain of all government. But there is legislation which the Federal Government alone can enact, and which is absolutely vital in order to secure the attainment of our purpose."

Our hopes for the future are based upon the fact that reforms can be brought about, great and important reforms, which will check and eliminate many evils that prey upon our social and industrial life to-day. But they can be brought about only through patient, persistent, and self-denying labors. We want improvements, but not through long-continued effort. Though the quest be worldly glory, it must be remembered that Belgium is a country, not a road. Like the men on the stock exchange or the tramp at the door, we want something for nothing. We want temperance, but not to the extent of paying the price for it, and the cause suffers as a consequence. There is need for the perseverance of the saints, and the faith which gives substance to things hoped for. To help a

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

weak man to stand, to speak the word that guides the youth, to use the franchise in the interests of good government, to bring about such changes as point in the direction of our ultimate goal, and to invest one's influence with those moral and spiritual forces that make for the betterment of mankind—that is to contribute something toward the solution of the moral and social problems of our day.

The progress of temperance is bound up with the moral progress of man and the world as a whole. Are we, therefore, to give up all effort? This would be implicitly to acquiesce in the principle of the drunkard and the "publican." The cause of temperance was never more hopeful than to-day, and all honor to those whose quiet, patient toil has made this statement possible. The restrictive measures under which moderationists and their exploiters are chafing at the present time have not been arbitrarily imposed from without, but have come as the natural result of an enlightened moral sentiment which regards the bodies and souls of men as of greater concern than distillers' dividends. The law which liberates the youth of the future from the enslaving habits of the present was enacted, indeed, on a certain date, but the sentiment which it crystallizes took generations to foster and develop. The work of reform is not what Macaulay called "a moral spurt," but a Marathon race, where endurance, sobriety, and a knowledge of the distance are necessary in the interests of an ultimate victory.

If we cannot slip the capstone into its place, we

ANTIPHONALS

should not be unwilling to put a block in the basement or a brick in the wall. I like the teacher who plants saplings around the playgrounds in the faith that his successors will enjoy their shade; I like the statesman whose policy looks beyond the accidents of the next election; I like the citizen who endeavors with all his might to improve present conditions, with the hope that future generations will benefit by his labors and continue his program. If our work is to be permanent, we must proceed on the principle of One who in communicating a new life to humanity began by transforming the individual and who trained twelve select men the burden of whose message to the world was to be this: The kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how, first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear.

XVII

THE PROBLEM OF PAIN

'And who would lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through eternity?'

—*John Milton.*

"GOD made all things very good. Pain is not very good. Therefore God did not make pain." This is the sort of syllogism that appeals to the unreflective mind and in proclaiming which fortunes have been made. The prophet of heroic mold was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The applause of the crowd is for one who, in denying the reality of pain, becomes a millionaire. The founder of a new religion nowadays rivals the inventor of an automobile or a flying machine and runs fewer risks of breaking the bones.

The author of our syllogism should define his premise, and in doing so he may find that "the good" is a more complex entity than he imagines. The strength of the syllogism comes from the assumption of its middle term, that pain is not very good. We challenge the assumption and submit the reasons why.

The pain of human life is a fact. Every man is more or less painfully aware of its existence and if so on what grounds can we deny reality to it? It is here, good, bad, or indifferent, and any theory of life that

ANTIPHONALS

fails to take cognizance of it or to articulate it into the general scheme of things is defective and hopelessly one-sided. This is a *universe*, and there is nothing besides. Nothing within it can be wholly foreign. Anyone who tries to prove the absolute unreality of anything that exists is implicitly passing a vote of censure on the wisdom and goodness of that intelligence that pervades the world.

I

Looking at the question from the *physical* side, pain has a protective function. It comes to man as a warning that some law has been violated, and that if he is to continue in the enjoyment of life he must change his ways. When a hand or a foot pains him, there is a chance of its becoming whole again, but when it has lost all feeling there is less hope. The possibility of doing better is at the basis of pain. It shows nature's struggle to maintain life. The ordinary phenomena of hunger and thirst are admittedly forms of pain, and few people succeed in permanently arguing these away. They are notes of warning without which man would go on unmolested until his energy would become exhausted and life extinct. Pain, then, has a cautionary use: it shows nature's efforts at construction and repair; it is a signal of a certain want which can be met; it is a state incidental to the processes of waste and repair, and apart from these life, as we know it, would not be at all.

The same truth presents itself in the higher aspects

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

of our nature. The doubts that daily beset us and our craving for better knowledge may not unjustly be called *intellectual* pain. Every advance in thought is accompanied by struggle. "It is wrestling against the breeze that works toughness into the trees and giant-hood into men." No great thought in science, poetry, or philosophy ever came to see the light of day except through travail on the part of the disinterested lover of truth, and we can appropriate the intellectual achievements of the past only to the extent that we go through the same process.

In the *moral* sphere, the violation of the laws that obtain there is accompanied by remorse. Conscience censures the man who ignores her dictates. Were it otherwise, there would be no check in a downward progress and no endeavor to mend, with the result that man would become a moral wreck. From this point of view, the hell of conscience may be said to be the only hope of the moral world.

On the other hand, there are many bitter experiences in life that have no connection with error of any kind. Every moral victory is won at the expense of soul energy. "Truth cannot be persisted in without pains," says Ruskin, "but it is worth them." It is certainly worth them, but the pains experienced are as real as the truth which is maintained. "To speak and act with constancy and precision is nearly as difficult and perhaps as meritorious as to speak it under intimidation or penalty, and it is a strange thought how many men there are, as I trust, who hold to it at the

ANTIPHONALS

cost of fortune or life for one who would hold to it at the cost of a little daily trouble." There are phases of character which can be developed only through some of the most unwelcome experiences. In the world of outward nature, the rainy days of the springtime, the dullness of the cloudy season, and the darkness of the night are as necessary as the light and cheering rays of the sun. It is not otherwise in the life of a nation or an individual. The soul that suffers no grief or pain is shallow and hard and devoid of sympathy with much that may be met with in life. The hardest experience that one may have becomes an important element in the character that he builds, and the bitterest grief that has wrung his heart has its contribution to make toward the enrichment of his life.

" 'Tis sorrow builds the shining ladder up
Whose golden rounds are our calamities
Whereon our feet, firm planting, nearer God
The Spirit climbs and has its eyes unsealed."

Where there is personality that persists and grows, where there are doubts and the possibility of fuller knowledge, where there is conscience to be heeded and principle to be maintained, and where there is character to be rounded off and developed, there are pain and struggle that give zest and interest if not joy to life. The pleasure that comes from overcoming difficulties more than atones for the failures and repeated endeavors by the way. The same condition that admits of pleasure necessarily makes its opposite possible. The consciousness of limitation is inseparable from an

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

impulse to higher things; and to bring to its highest the life of him to whom we owe our Christian religion, the processes of pain were necessary. In bringing many sons unto glory the author of their salvation was made *perfect through suffering*.

II

Thus far, then, we see that the presence of pain in the life of the individual is not a matter of accident. On the contrary, it seems to serve a beneficent purpose and to play a necessary part in a morally ordered world. But we do not exist as mere individuals. Man knows himself as an individual only in organized human society, and he lives in relation to his fellow not merely because he needs his protection and co-operation, but because he unconsciously recognizes that he has aims in common with him. It is not mutual selfishness, as Schopenhauer suggests, but mutual sympathy that brings people together and unites them in the interests of the general good. Now, what is sympathy? The fact that the Greek word *pascho*, from which it is derived, means to suffer gives us a hint as to its meaning. To show sympathy (in one of its forms) is to suffer because another suffers. In short, it is a form of pain, and in the social structure it is the badge of brotherhood. It is the vital element that gives unity to the many parts and makes them work harmoniously for a common purpose. To remove it is to remove the prop upon which society is

ANTIPHONALS

built and to deprive man of one of the noblest attributes of his nature.

III

We must go one step farther. If pain is a reality in the life of man, and serves a divine purpose there, the counterpart of the reality must obtain in the nature of Deity. Pain is not supposed to be compatible with the nature of God. To attribute joy or sorrow to him is to admit failure to determine his real nature. A noted divine once wrote: "The Eternal Mind is not capable of grieving or God's infinite blessedness of suffering the least damage or diminution. God cannot be afflicted." But pain is not necessarily a defect. It is possible for pain to coexist with perfection. It is impossible to find perfection without it. A Being who has no sympathy for his creatures, who lives in isolation from the world and all the concerns of men, ceases to have any meaning for us. He would be but an absentee God who abides

"Where Zeus lives the most,
Within the eventual element of calm."

Sympathy and perfection are not exclusive. The one includes the other. God's *compassion* is alone infinite. Once a unit of existence can be found in which God is not interested and for which he has no sympathy, a dualism is discovered and God is dethroned.

Christianity is the proof in human experience of God's sympathy with man. The life of Jesus Christ

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

was real in its joys and sorrows, in its sympathy and sacrifice. Apart from all speculative theology, the death of Christ was the "final argument" to convince the world of his love.

Then welcome all that gives cheer and gladness in life. Welcome also the pain of limb that tells of duty done and the stress of thought through which we grasp at the skirts of truth; welcome the trial of faith that anticipates the crown of life and the beclouded hope that speaks of a brighter day; and welcome the love whose pain is but an indication of its intensity and whose highest expression is in the sacrifice that triumphs over death and in the claim for its object of the glories of the life everlasting.

"Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go!
Be our joys three parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!"

PART III
IN MAJOR KEY

XVIII

VICTORY IN THE MAKING

"The far winds told the turning of the strife;
Into his deeds there crept a strange new fire.
Unconquerable, the glory of his life
Fulfilled my soul's desire."

—Quoted by L. A. Banks in "*The World's Childhood.*"

A DARING challenge was thrown out recently by an English editor that the Church had perpetuated a failure and that the modern world stood in sore need of a substitute for Christianity. "We do not hold up the defeated warrior as the type of the military hero. Why should it be otherwise in the Church militant?"

It was this assumption that the Church did hold up the example of One who had failed that led another to bemoan "the mysteriously disappointing career of Jesus," and Schopenhauer to regard it as a moral outrage to take an instrument of torture as the symbol of the Christian faith. These men are representative of a type. The life of Jesus was for them a failure, and human progress is retarded by holding him up as a model.

They are not alone in their contention. Those who had opposed him in his lifetime and who were instrumental in securing his condemnation believed themselves to have won a mighty victory. They disregarded the conventionalities that keep men apart;

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

enemies became friends as they congratulated themselves in celebrating the overthrow of a common foe.

We would expect, however, that those who were on most intimate terms with Jesus and who had breathed his spirit for years would have seen things in a different light. On the contrary, his followers saw failure written in every scene and act of what Professor Pfeiderer calls the "fearful tragedy" of the cross. When Jesus was arrested his disciples all forsook him and fled. Their blighted hopes are reflected in the plaintive words of the friends on the way to Emmaus. How comes it, then, that not only skeptics of the present day, but the friends and enemies of his own day, had all concluded that he had failed? Is this skepticism unfounded? Is there any ground for such rejoicings on the one hand or for such utter despair on the other?

Jesus announced his program first of all to the guardians of the existing religious order. He presented to them his conception of the kingdom, the inwardness of true religion, and the worth of the individual human life. They listened to him, but they made their own deductions. They heard their doctrines implicitly assailed. They were sufficiently keen to read their own downfall in the progress of this idealistic Reformer, and they exerted their influence against him. He had looked for a better welcome. To whom should he go if not to those who were officially appointed to further the interests of true religion? But these are not always the readiest to welcome new truth, nor do they know the highest when they see it. As a matter

IN MAJOR KEY

of fact, they do not see it, and they could hardly be expected to know it. They stand for the existing order and hurl their anathemas upon all who would presume to question the permanency of their doctrines.

Jesus turned from these "blind mouths" to the multitudes. He was apparently more successful with them. They were attracted by his teaching, and some of them by the startling character of his work. This was, however, a form of notoriety which Jesus did not desire. The common people heard him gladly, but craven curiosity and worldly hopes were elements all too prominent in their devotion. When he told them of the sign of Jonah and the spiritual nature of his kingdom, they set their hopes upon Barabbas and loyalists of his type. For upwards of a year, then, he concentrated his teaching on the twelve, hoping that through them his message would ultimately be received. But not one of them seemed capable of comprehending his meaning, and with bitter disappointment he overheard them disputing as to the chief places in his kingdom. There is a touch of genuine pathos in that last scene at the judgment hall where "Peter went in to see the end."

Thus he was opposed by the religious leaders, rejected by the people, and misunderstood by his immediate followers. Opposition and antipathy soon develop into hatred. A plot was formed against him, one of his own band became the instrument of betrayal, and when he was but three and thirty years old they nailed him to a cross and left him there till he was dead.

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

The people whom he came to bless turned their backs upon him, the religious forces of the time were all arrayed against him, and the city of his heart rejoiced in his downfall. In the name of religion and justice he was condemned. For the peace of the state and the good of the Church he was crucified, and special precautions were taken as he was laid securely in the grave.

This, then, is the situation in the face of which we are called upon to establish the triumph of Jesus. Shall we say at once, it was not his triumph but his defeat, it was not success but utter failure, it was not victory but disaster dark and dire? He spoke of this occasion as his hour. It was neither his hour nor his day! "This is your hour and the power of darkness." The enemy have won the day, and they bless the Lord for his goodness!

Now, we might suspend judgment and await the final issue. He was put to death, it is true, but "he burst the bands of death." We might wait for a few generations and note the reception accorded his religion throughout the world. His followers have taken heart again, and they remain steadfast in the face of hardship and persecution. In less than three centuries faith in him becomes enthroned as the religion of the Roman Empire. Here is the real triumph, and to confirm it we need only follow the stream of history to see the highest civilization of the world distinguished by the name of Christendom and learn of heroic mis-

IN MAJOR KEY

sionaries in every land ministering in his name and rejoicing as the heralds of good news.

To adopt this line of argument would be to raise more questions than we could answer and to admit failure in the beginning. We refuse to postpone victory for nineteen centuries. We refuse to postpone it for three centuries. We refuse to postpone it for three days. If we cannot find victory in his life, we shall not find it in his death. If we cannot find victory in his death, we shall not find it three days or three centuries after his death. The element of time does not change the character of an act or event. If it is bad, it is always bad; if it is good, it remains good. If it is failure to-day, it is failure always; if it is triumph at all, it is now or never!

There was one at least who realized that the death of Jesus did not necessarily mean the overthrow of his cause, one who consciously recognized that in view of all the circumstances anything else than death would have been failure. That one was Jesus himself. We dare not leave him out of the reckoning. Early in his career he became aware of the coming struggle. We get the first suggestions of it after his baptism. The national hopes of the people appealed strongly to him, and for a time they held him enthralled. But the more he thought and prayed, the more clearly did he interpret the highest Messianic hopes of the nation; and the more he yielded himself to the will of God in realizing these hopes, the more was it brought home to him that his kingdom must be spiritual and that his influence

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

and power must be exerted for spiritual ends. We receive, then, the first hint of triumph in connection with the temptation, where Jesus refuses to compromise his soul for the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them.

When the applause of the multitude had died away and the enmity of the religious leaders had been formulated into a definite and progressive policy, the faithful few began to droop and drowse. They thought of the homes they had left behind and the hopeless future opening before them. When they realized that Jesus had given death a place in his calculations, their spirits were broken. The Master interprets their state, and with a heart overflowing with sympathy he speaks of peace in the midst of tribulation and of victory already achieved. This is his challenge to their lack of faith: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome." He had resisted the attractions of the world and surmounted its terrors, and he saw that his death was to be the perfecting of a sacrifice already begun and the climax of a victory attained in life. With such words of confidence and reassurance he ministered comfort to those who had forsaken all and followed him.

A further hint is given in connection with his entry into Jerusalem. He had realized that there was imminent danger, and his friends cautioned him against the intrigues of those who were panting for his life. But he faced the issue with calm fortitude and trust. In imagination we can see him a swift, mute figure intent on carrying out his purpose. On arrival he accepts the

IN MAJOR KEY

homage which an excited people are ready to bestow. "He proclaims himself openly the promised Messiah, and the people break palm branches and wave them exultingly as he makes his way down the mountain road. Jesus knew too well how much their hosannas and acclams were worth, but he accepts the proffered homage and steels himself in the face of the events of the coming day."

Jesus undertook to interpret his own death as the condition of the fulfillment of his mission. Here we have a more definite statement as to the prospect of ultimate success. He illustrates by a grain of wheat how he who loves his life shall lose it, and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. In these and other sayings we see the principle which determined his course. Death alone can so disengage the vital forces of his personality as to give them a free course in the life of humanity. His goal was not the salvation of himself, but of men. That he did not fail of his purpose we can see from a declaration like this: "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me."

In other words, Jesus recognized that the divine purpose implied his death. Why it should be so we are not called upon here to say, but it is quite plain that he believed this to be so. The power of the cross to awaken in the hearts of sinful men the hopes of a new life is sufficient evidence that he was not mistaken. This fact accounts for the calmness that marks him throughout the whole of the ordeal. Jesus never ap-

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

peared to better advantage than when the shadow of the cross had fallen athwart his path. It was not to be expected that he could pass through all without "a terrible conflict of feelings, the ebb and flow of the most diverse emotions, anguish and ecstasy, the most profound and crushing depression, the most triumphant joy, and the most majestic peace swayed hither and thither like the moods of a vast ocean." Temptation made its final onset in the Garden of Gethsemane, but he fought the enemy to the last. The bitterness of death was past, and he was able to go through the scenes which followed with a composure which nothing could disturb and a "majesty which converted his trial into the pride and glory of humanity."

Observe his relation to the penitent thief. His claim was that he could save sinners. The religious classes were offended at his latitudinarianism and his apparent blindness to the character of those who thrust themselves upon him. Here in the midst of the confusion of his friends and the jubilations of his enemies his spirit touches a sinful man and he prays: "Lord, remember me." This is one further opportunity of saving men and incidentally of vindicating his claim. "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," comes the reassuring reply.

Jesus taught men the power of forgiveness. The Sermon on the Mount is permeated with this new spirit. He had forgiven men who had sinned against God and humanity, but now cruel hands have been raised against himself. They wag their heads and jeer

IN MAJOR KEY

at him. Surely he will pray that the judgment of God may descend and instantly consume such sinners! "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," is the prayer and excuse which he offers for them all. We would never have seen Jesus at his best, nor known how far God can go in the way of forgiveness, but for this scene on Calvary.

His life stood for sacrifice. There is no other truth so outstanding in his whole career. He gave up what most people seek—riches, honor, fame, position, power. His teaching is but the outward expression of this truth. He contrasts the good shepherd with the hireling. He says the supreme test of love is that a man lay down his life for his friend. This is the highest law of life, and the greatest sacrifice is that of life itself. Many try to teach this truth who are not able to live it. Can we find it illustrated in life at all? Jesus is no mere victim in the grip of a grim necessity, but a willing sacrifice.

In his death, then, he vindicates his claim and exemplifies his teaching, which otherwise would have been spread over the whole period of his ministry. His death is the epitome of his life. He came to save sinners, and he speaks words of hope to the thief on either hand; he taught men to pray for their enemies, and he says, "Father, forgive them"; he taught the power of sacrifice, and he gave his life to seal his devotion. "His death presents in a dramatic and compact form that very devotedness which is diffused through every part of his life. Here his self-sacrifice shows

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

complete and perfect; here it is exhibited in that tragic and supreme form which in all cases arrests attention and commands respect. The death of Christ, though but a part of a self-sacrificing life, yet stands by itself as the culmination and seal of that life; it catches the eye and strikes the mind and conveys at one view the main impression made by the whole life and character of him who gave himself upon the cross. His death, even more than his life, bears witness to the love of God. It is the last syllable of that great utterance, the utterance of God's love for men, the finalevidence that nothing is grudged us by God."

Where, then, is the triumph of Jesus? In his exalting the spiritual when he was urged to set up a worldly kingdom and in his refusal to prostitute the higher powers of the soul to the securing of momentary pleasure; it is found in his recognizing the path marked out for him by divine wisdom and love and in his readiness to follow that path even when it led him to a cross; in his adoption of the one divine method by which alone the vital forces of his personality are so disengaged from their local and temporal limitations as to make him available for every man; it is to be found in the reassuring words spoken to the thief as evidence of his power to redeem humanity; and in his wonderful prayer where he excuses the sins of his persecutors and asks God to forgive them; it is found in the ultimate sacrifice of life itself, and thus the absolute consistency of his teaching and life. This is why the most sacred cere-

IN MAJOR KEY

mony in every Christian Church is the commemoration, not of defeat, but of victory; this is why an instrument of torture becomes transformed into the symbol of ultimate sacrifice. It was not the cross which made Christ what he is. It was Christ, his obedience, sacrifice, and love, that made the cross what it is. Through him "the emblem of the world's shame and reproach has become the emblem of Christian faith, the treasure of Christian hope, and the banner of Christian victory." Jesus triumphed over its shame and cruelty, and "as the sunset with its crimson glory makes even the putrid pool burn like a shield of gold and drenches with brilliance the vilest object held up against its beams, he converted the symbol of slavery and wickedness into a symbol for whatever is most pure and glorious in the world."

And we must not forget that the victory by which Jesus overcame the world was one of faith. He never lost faith in God. "Men of piety and saintly bearing have been driven by the presence of pain and disappointment to challenge God's righteousness in words which it is not lawful for man to utter." We think of Job and others like him who were perfect and upright, who feared God and turned away from evil, and yet when the clouds of sorrow and disappointment broke, they lost their hold and longed for the land of darkness and disorder, where the light is as midnight. "But when the fortunes of Jesus were at their blackest, when he was baited by a raging pack of wolflike enemies, and when he was sinking into unplumbed abysses of pain

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

and desertion, he still looked up and said, 'Father.' True, he was a young man with all the strength and hope of young manhood still coursing in his veins. In the light of this fact we can interpret his prayer: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." There was a moment when darkness encompassed him and when heaven seemed to have joined with earth in utterly rejecting him. Out of this blackness he cried: "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Had God forsaken him? The one whom God has forsaken will never appeal to God for help. His cry is the negation of its own despair, and a moment later he commends his spirit into the Almighty hands.

He never lost faith in man. If anyone ever had reason to lose faith in man, it was he. He was rejected, tortured, killed. But he knew what was in man. He believed that men would not have done what they did if they had known. He believed that when they would understand things aright they would appreciate the truth of his life. He believed that the death he was about to die would so appeal to men that they would be drawn irresistibly to him. His faith has not been misplaced. It is truer to-day than it ever was that "the whole world has gone after him."

He never lost faith in himself. One would think that when there was not another soul living who had comprehended his meaning, he would have become suspicious as to his own worth; when even Peter and James and John did not understand, when no one stood for him or by him, that he would have lost all

IN MAJOR KEY

faith in himself and his cause. Not for one moment! He believed in himself. He claimed that his message would go to the uttermost parts of the earth and that his death, instead of being a stumbling-block, would be the most attractive power in his religion. In the hour of his death he saw the glory of the Son of Man.

In Jesus we see the triumph of truth as against insincerity and sham. Had he belied himself, he could have escaped the cross. Had he been less sincere, he could have left the money changers in the temple undisturbed; had he been less righteous, he would have refrained from his reference to whited sepulchers. It was the goodness of his life that made the prayer of the Pharisee such mockery in his ears, and his stainless purity prompted his illustration of the platter and the cup. It was his regard for the helpless that inspired his condemnation of those who devoured widows' houses. Had he been less true, he would have been left unharmed. Had he yielded to the popular wishes, he would have been crowned king. That would have been tragedy unrelieved! That would have been goodness doing obeisance at an evil shrine! The spirituality of Jesus repelled the multitudes, his innocence crowned him with thorns, his goodness left him without a friend, and his love of human beings drove him to the cross to die. Our faith in the universe as constituted on righteous principles has been put on trial, and One who was closest to the bosom of the universal Heart has finally stood the test, and our faith is reassured.

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

We recall Jesus's loyalty to the divine will, betrayed in his fortitude and unwavering trust; we stand amazed at his purpose that held firm when friend and foe alike seemed to have lost faith in him; we bow in adoration in the presence of a love too unselfish to live and too brave to be unwilling to die; and in this attitude of remembrance, reverence, and awe we give thanks to the living God for this spiritual victory in which we, too, have a vital part, and join with Emperor Julian in a conclusion that is slowly but surely vindicating itself in the experience of the world: "Thou hast triumphed, O Galilean!"

XIX

VISION AND THE IDEAL

"Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, and he saw, and believed." (John 20: 8.)

"I NEVER saw in a sunset colors like those," remarked a would-be critic as he gazed on a beautiful painting in the gallery. "Don't you wish you could?" was the brief but significant reply of the artist who stood near by. There are many people who never see things as they are. They are satisfied with a surface view and the gift by which the inward beauty of a scene may be represented has never been awakened within them. Ruskin has a statement to this effect, that for every hundred men who can hear, only one can speak; and for every hundred who can speak, only one can think; and for every hundred who can think, only one can see. Wordsworth's Peter Bell is a fair sample of the average man—

"A primrose on the river's brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

Every school is in a sense a school for the blind, where those who are indifferent to the beauty of nature and the meaning of life are taught to see things as they are and, as a whole, to see them in relation to one another and in their universal significance.

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

This truth is illustrated in the manner in which the resurrection of our Lord was viewed on the first Easter morning. The Scripture record shows that there were three distinct types of character present at the sepulcher at early dawn, and they all saw what had taken place. (John 20: 1-8.) They all saw, but they did not see alike, and the sacred writer makes use of three distinct Greek verbs, *blepo*, *theoreo*, and *eidon*, words which indicate differences in the way of seeing, but which are translated by the one word "see."

Mary Magdalene was the first at the grave, according to the account in the fourth Gospel. She was ever ready to show her devotion, since that day when her sins had been forgiven her. She saw (*βλέπει*) that the stone was rolled away, and she came to the pious but incorrect conclusion that her Master's body had been taken and placed somewhere else. This conclusion is arrived at with the least possible thought. The intensity of her feelings stultified her thinking faculty, and she is quite confused. "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him," is the cry of a soul unable to interpret the situation before it.

We speak of "the empty tomb" and make belief in it almost a standard of orthodoxy. Here is a woman, however, who saw and believed in the empty tomb, but who had not the faintest idea that her Lord was "alive for evermore." It takes more than an empty tomb to bring the stupendous truth of the resurrection home to our hearts. The empty tomb might be ac-

IN MAJOR KEY

counted for in half a dozen different ways other than that in which the Christian Church accounts for it. You may say that Christ was never put into the tomb at all, or that he was not dead, but in a swoon, when placed there. You may say that his friends removed his body and placed it in a more secure place, or that his enemies stole his body while the soldiers slept. These and other explanations have, as a matter of fact, been given, but to accept any one of them is to deny the commonly accepted view.

I take this woman as a type of the popular, unreflective mind, the mind that fails to go beyond the surface, and, as a natural result, comes to incorrect conclusions. The great fault of human beings is that they do not think. They would hire men to do their thinking for them. They put a premium on the preacher who expects them to do the minimum amount of thinking. If the resurrection means for us simply the bare historic fact that Jesus died and in the course of three days rose from the dead, we are in the same state morally and spiritually as if we had never heard of it. There is a way of seeing that is not essentially different from not seeing. Blindness meant originally to see dimly. There are a good many people to-day who see dimly, who think incoherently about the things they see, and all these have their prototype in Mary Magdalene, who, it is true, saw the emptiness of the tomb, but did not as yet see the fullness of life made possible by the glorious victory of Christ.

But the account goes on. When Peter and John

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

heard the report they were alarmed and obviously became suspicious as to the explanation submitted. The mighty hopes which they had entertained may have been revived for the moment. They may have recalled some of the Master's sayings and attached a new meaning to them. Somehow they felt that all was not lost. Peter came hurriedly to the grave, and he saw the stone rolled away but he saw more than that. He saw (θέωπεϊ) the linen cloths lying there and "the napkin that was about his head lying, not with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself." To the man who does not think, these details simply mean that the friends who removed the body are behaving very strangely or that the robbers must have been not only composed but generous to leave so much fresh new linen folded up in this way. Robbers generally leave things in disorder. The sense of guilt within results in hurry and confusion without. It is not a characteristic of robbers to leave anything behind. Their business is to take things with them. These linen goods of superior quality would have been of more value to them than the lifeless body of Jesus.

But to the man who sees and observes, all this is not the work of robbers at all. It looks more like the work of friends. But who are the friends that would be responsible for this work without the knowledge of Peter and John and the other disciples? "This looks like the Master's own work," Peter thought within himself. Peter saw what Mary Magdalene saw, but he observed things more closely and related different incidents in

IN MAJOR KEY

the situation. "He united in one the observation of the fact and the reflection on the fact," and yet he found himself unable to come to any conclusion in the matter. He attained to that hopeful middle state which Plato speaks of as the beginning of philosophy. So we read that "Peter departed wondering in himself at that which was come to pass."

Peter represents a large class of people in this situation. He sees and theorizes on what he sees and ends in a state of wonder. If the resurrection of Jesus Christ means for us that one more insoluble problem is added to what is already a long list, then we might as well be without it altogether. We value thought and reason, but the *truths* by which men live are not so much conclusions arrived at in a logical series as living ideas which awaken in the human heart or which we grasp in one exalted moment and of which no logic or argument can evermore deprive us. Theory and life are quite distinct. John Stuart Mill had ideas in his philosophy which would land him in atheism, but in practice he asked grace at table as other thankful Christian people are wont to do. The resurrection must be more than a theory with Peter, otherwise his name shall never be heard of in connection with the apostolic Church. Wonder is good as far as it goes. It is a more hopeful state than that of indifference or positive denial. It is the beginning of philosophy, but we must go beyond the beginning and beyond philosophy for a conception of the resurrection which will be of ethical and religious value to us.

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

But there is a third person who is witness to this scene. It is the beloved John. His instincts are true and his insight keen. He knew the Master better than any other. He saw what Mary saw and observed the details and related the facts as Peter had done, but instead of rashly offering an explanation or of working himself up into a state of wonderment, he seizes the ideal content of the whole situation, and he knows immediately that the Lord is risen! He arrived at this truth not by inference from the facts of outward vision alone—Mary and Peter had access to all these—not by a chain of reasoning, but more than all from his consciousness of the Master's spiritual presence with him. He was more susceptible to that presence than any other. One sometimes knows that there is some one in the room. He sees and hears nothing, but he feels that some one is near. A man of John's keen spiritual perception felt that his Lord was alive. "He visited no other tomb, he questioned no one." The result was that he saw (*εἶδεν*) and believed!

To see, in this sense, is to know; it is to have the truth of what one outwardly sees take such possession of him that it becomes a part of him; it means to have theories clothe themselves with life, and sight swallowed up of faith; it is to have one emerge out of the midst of the apparently conflicting details of the real with the ideal content as an abiding possession.

John saw and believed, and I take this to mean that for the first time he had realized that Jesus was not overcome of death; that sin had not triumphed; that

IN MAJOR KEY

the enemy, including the last enemy, had been defeated; that Jesus was alive and that his promise of a spiritual kingdom and an abiding presence would be fulfilled. It was this faith that restored the confidence of the disciples and sent them forward to preach in the power of a resurrected life, and this faith became the corner-stone of the Christian Church. Remove from the Church the truth that Jesus conquered in his death and that he now reigns in a kingdom which has its seat in the hearts of men; remove the life, inspiration, and power begotten of this conviction, and you leave an empty husk, a body from which the spirit has taken its flight.

The resurrection is thus no mere theological dogma, but the record of a victory for goodness and truth. Jesus Christ is not dead; he lives in God, he is glorified, he lives in his followers. As Jesus died, so must we die. We are not only to believe in the risen Christ, but to live the risen life. In this latter sense the resurrection is not merely a fact outside of us, but a life within us. We are in danger of postponing the resurrection indefinitely; whereas, to be of religious value, it must mean the beginning of a higher spiritual life now. This is what it meant for John. He saw and believed. His faith had been revived, and from this time forth he lived by the truth of the risen Christ. This is what it meant to Paul: he had seen the Lord, and from that day forth he suffered the loss of all things that he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

The strongest, and yet the simplest, argument in

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

favor of the resurrection is the influence of Christ in the world, the spiritual sympathy which he manifested toward the work that he began, and the lives transformed and ennobled through faith in him. Christ is not only risen, but he is risen in the hearts of his people. His spirit rules them, his life sustains them, and the great love of his heart is their joy day and night. "Now I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The resurrection means union with God; it means Christ himself and eternal life already in possession. "I am the resurrection and the life." John saw this and believed.

XX

THE CULTIVATION OF THE INNER LIFE

THE proposition to which the Christian Church is dedicated, the spiritual enterprise to which it forever stands committed, is the cultivation of the inner life. When we face a theme like this, so far-reaching in its implications and so universal in its requirement, differences of race and creed and country vanish, and the formidableness of the common task alone confronts us. For our task is concerned with human nature, with all its possibilities of good and evil; it is concerned with the Church, ever in danger of "being at ease in Zion" and of compromising with the low standards of the people and institutions it is intended to redeem; it is concerned with a world that looks at things seen and temporal and fails to grasp the reality of the unseen and eternal. Out of this material we are called upon to construct the kingdom of God. In relation to these elements, so uncompromising in their response and so unyielding in their demands, we have been taught daily to pray, "Thy kingdom come." When we consider this task in all its bearings, in the light of the courage it requires and the patience and sympathy that must be brought to it, there is no wonder that we should exclaim with the apostle, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

In a Scottish newspaper a year or two ago an advertisement is said to have appeared with the following heading: "Wanted—A Horse to Do the Work of a Parish Minister." It may be true that the work of the parish minister is always heavy. It is true that the work of the Christian minister is more arduous to-day than it has been, and therefore constitutes a greater challenge to our youth than does any other avenue of Christian service. There is no magic by which we can transmute the dross of our human nature into elements of preciousness. There is no wizard wand by which we may change our common grayness into all the beautiful colors of the rainbow. "It is by no breath, turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death." The call is for Christian men who have faith to undertake, patience to continue, and might to achieve in the name of the Lord God Almighty.

But if it be true that our task is formidable and the demands great, it is equally true that the supply is greater than any demand that may be made upon it. For this task of ours is ultimately not ours at all, but God's. It is he who made us, and not we ourselves. He has anticipated the needs of the human spirit in all its out-reachings and made provision for every possible emergency. The Church is his, and the presence of his Spirit within it is alone responsible for its continuity and permanence. The kingdom is his, and we are not to act as if we had arrogated to ourselves divine prerogatives. The world is his, and we

IN MAJOR KEY

have no ground for suspecting that he has abdicated the throne. There are some things that God has put within his own keeping, and we neither glorify him nor distinguish ourselves when we behave as if we were in supreme command.

The apostle is leading us along a promising path and toward the solution of a great problem when, for example, he says to believers at Ephesus (Eph. 3: 14-16) with whose progress in the faith he is deeply concerned: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power through his spirit in the inward man." Nothing less than the richness of his glory, mark you! No hint of shortage there! There is no evidence that the supply will ever know diminution. If the task be of his ordering, the equipment necessary for its accomplishment is also of his bestowal. We think of aspects of God's world that suggest the inexhaustible fullness of the provision that he has made for his Church and for the world and for his people in it. The mountains speak of loftiness and grandeur, the sea of mystery and boundlessness, the prairie of freedom and expansiveness, and the heavens of beauty and majesty. These are but a few of the many ways in which the Creator is seeking to prevent us from entertaining small and contracted views of him and his resources. At the best they are but symbols of his glory, hints and

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

suggestions of the largeness of the way in which he has thought of us.

We speak of God's grace, so free in its bestowment and so efficacious in its redeeming quality: by grace are ye saved through faith. We sing of God's mercy, the wideness and the kindness of it all: the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy. We plead the riches of his love, fathomless, boundless: God so loved the world. But when we speak of "the riches of his glory" we speak of something that at once includes his mercy, his grace, his love, and all else that is involved in the conception of the divine perfections. Here is the secret of the provision that God has made for us, and here, too, is the source of the life we need and the spiritual power without which all our strivings shall be of none effect.

The practical question that emerges is not alone to know the magnitude of the task, although we should be seized of it if we are to face it bravely and manfully; not alone to know the greatness of the supply, although we must know this before we can intelligently draw upon it. What we are anxious most of all to know is, how this limitless supply may be made available for sinful, needy beings like ourselves. We cannot face a matter like this as we would an unploughed field and say, "Let us go to and plough it." We cannot proceed to organize the dew of the morning nor the light of the noonday sun. No more can we commandeer the resources of the Eternal. But we can determine our attitude to them. We can determine

IN MAJOR KEY

our relation to the spiritual forces ever operative and the sources of spiritual power accessible to every one of us. We may bend the knee. We may bow the head. We may heed his voice, "Seek ye my face," and answer: "Thy face, O Lord, will I seek."

1. In this day, when we are so pronounced in our appreciation of the spirit of the men who do things, there is need of our emphasizing the complementary aspect, equally and perhaps more important, the "wise passiveness" of the poet.

"Nor less I deem that there are powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness."

After the Great War, the late Bonar Law made a shrewd and psychologically timely use of the word "tranquillity." He appealed to a people who were war-weary and ready to grasp at any policy that promised relief. Bonar Law's policy gave this promise, and he came into power with an overwhelming vote. There is a message in the word "tranquillity" for us to-day. There is a message for us in Wordsworth's "wise passiveness." Nature and Nature's God would speak to us and "impress" us and enable us to participate in a rich and abounding life, but all too frequently we are so preoccupied as to be in danger of missing all.

There was a time when the family gathered together for worship, when parents and children blended their voices in praise, committing the home and its members

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

to the safekeeping of the Almighty Father. This condition is apparently passing with serious loss to the development of inward life and character. Something better, or at least equally helpful, may take the place of this ancient institution that materially contributed to the richness of our spiritual heritage. But with so many outside interests intruding upon the privacy and seclusion of the home—the telegram at the front door, the telephone at the center, and the radio on the roof—the opportunity for family devotion is reduced to a minimum. The Church itself is in danger of yielding to the same tendency. We spoke of the Church, now we speak of a “plant”; we spoke of the sanctuary, now we speak of the “auditorium”; we used to think of the altar and the pulpit, now we have an off-hand way of talking of the “platform.” Change in vocabulary generally reflects a change of attitude. There are so many activities in the Church, most of them praiseworthy enough in themselves, that the ministry of the word and sacraments is in danger of finding second place. The human heart is open to so many interests, good and bad, that the more positive and constructive ideas have little chance to germinate. In the midst of all our diversified and contradictory interests, we forget the word of the Psalmist, “Be still and know that I am God”; we forget the altogether wise and politically sagacious utterance of the prophet, “In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.” Yes, and what is still more serious, we forget the New

IN MAJOR KEY

Testament, where the religion of pure inwardness and true spirituality is taught, that it was "when the doors were shut" Jesus appeared to his disciples, speaking words of encouragement and peace to their perturbed hearts. In our prosiness this may seem an impossible experience. "Two bodies," we declare in our scientific wisdom, "cannot occupy the same place at the same time." We fail to recognize that there are divine visitants, moral energies, fancies from a bluebell, and chorus-endings from Euripides that come to beautify and ennoble our lives only as we study to be quiet. If the door be open wide, whether of the home or church or human heart, we may not recognize Jesus for the clatter of the throng. But let the doors be shut, and his "All hail" will fall upon our listening ears. It was then that he appeared to his disciples, and the tremendous truth dawned upon them, all that Jesus was alive, and that sin and death had not triumphed; that by way of the cross he had fulfilled his mission, that by way of sacrifice he had conquered. "And he showed them his hands and his side." The cross which had blighted their hopes and symbolized his failure they see in new light, and it is becoming transfigured before them into the symbol of that which is most noble in life. Not until now are they ready to receive their commission: "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." These poor, disheartened folk are suddenly confronted with a world task. They see it and face it as never before, not in the name of a deluded and defeated leader,

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

but at the instigation and by the authority of a living and triumphing Saviour. They see and hear him, but still they hesitate. He anticipates their difficulty. He meets their need. He shares his victory and life with them, and "He breathed upon them and said, Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Whose soever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted; whose soever sins ye retain, they shall be retained." The Holy Spirit is the answer to our heart's need, the earnest of an ever-present Saviour, and the equipment guaranteeing the fulfillment of a mission otherwise overwhelming and hopeless. So wonderful is God's provision for those who trust in him! Their motives will be so purified and their decisions and judgments so enlightened and so just that what they determine on earth shall be registered as in harmony with the eternal laws of heaven.

All this and much else of power and conviction and new outlook came to them and sent them forth to continue the work that Jesus began to do and teach, when the doors were shut and their spirits responsive, with their wills not divided by contending allurements and their vision not blinded by the conflicting lights of earth.

In wise passiveness nature may feed this mind of ours and in the same responsive and devotional attitude God, by his Spirit, may impress upon us that which otherwise would be altogether beyond our power to experience or receive. The Christian home would do well to consider this. The Christian Church

IN MAJOR KEY

is not outside the danger zone in this respect. The individual heart may well learn to shut out diverting influences, to exclude some of the proffered gifts of earth, that heavenly peace and joy may enter, that moral earnestness and spiritual effectiveness may become the hall mark of our high calling.

2. There is room for *thought* and *meditation* in the Christian life. A distinction is sometimes made between the sermon and the worship of our Church services, a distinction which does not hold. It was Hegel who said that "to think is also to worship." Before he said it, we were taught to worship God with all our heart and strength and soul and mind. We are to worship God *with the mind*. Were it not for men who thought quietly and deeply about life and the world and God, and who took occasion to set down in permanent literary form the rich fruitage of their thinking, the book of Psalms, for example, would never have been written. Thoughtful men will always look for an intellectual articulation of our religious experiences. The type of Christian who seeks a clear and, as far as may be, consistent statement of the faith that is in him will continue to occupy a dominant position in the religious life of any community.

3. There is room for *devotional reading*. In these days, when so many books of questionable value are being written, we must be on our guard. The last few years, however, have seen the publication of a great many stimulating books dealing with different phases of the religious life. Let the religious book-

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

shelf grow! Think of Brierley's "Cultivation of the Soul," Watkinson's "Education of the Heart," Matheson's "Times of Retirement," Morrison's "The Wind on the Heath," Jowett's "Come Ye Apart," and Alexander Whyte's "Lord, Teach Us to Pray." In the absence of these and many other good books now available, we still have the Sacred Volume that sustained the faith of our fathers and gave the distinction of red blood and spiritual virility to their religion. The progress of science and scholarship, the progress of literary and historical study in our time serves but to enhance the essentially and distinctively religious message of the Bible.

The minister to-day must be a "great organizer," so we are told. He must believe in committees, clubs, societies, associations. These must have their place, but not the first place in a minister's life. He must be an organizer—yes, an organizer primarily and especially of his ideas, that in an orderly and effective way he may come before his people on Sunday and make the services an occasion in the religious experience of every one within the hearing of his voice. Sermons grow, but not on bushes. A man seizes an idea or, more correctly, an idea seizes him, and they look one another in the face. He ponders it, it sinks into his inner consciousness, and there in the course of the months it quietly and silently gathers to itself kindred ideas, until one day the occasion arrives when it must clothe itself in flesh and blood. The communication of a message like this becomes a joy to

IN MAJOR KEY

him who gives and a source of strength and inspiration to those who receive. But where a man's soul knows no quietness within him, it is hardly possible to bring the well-seasoned and well-reasoned, fully matured message, making for moral elevation and a truly nourished spiritual life.

"A Pilgrim in Palestine" is the title of an interesting little book by Major John Finley, of New York. During the war he served overseas in the American Red Cross Society and saw much of General Allenby and his wonderful army. Incidentally, it appears that, in the performance of his duty, Major Finley traveled from Egypt to Canaan. Moses led the children of Israel over this ground for a period of forty years. The journey could have been made in less time, but the forty years' wandering, with all of murmuring and trial that went with it, may have been the necessary moral discipline to qualify the emancipated Hebrews for the new and more complex and more highly developed civilization of the Promised Land. Major Finley traveled in a flying machine, making the trip in a few hours!

That is a very beautiful incident recording the walk to Emmaus, where two weary travelers are consoling one another in regard to the tragedy of the preceding few days. A stranger joins them and, "beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?" The journey must have

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

been a matter of hours, and in the end their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and they said: "Was not our heart burning within us while he spake to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures?" Major Finley made this trip in a six- or eight-cylinder car a matter of a few minutes!

We need some quietness, that the note of high seriousness may be overheard in our conversation and that the element of spiritual power may be discernible in our life and action. We speak of dynamics, the science that considers the relation of force to mass. We speak of a dynamo by which physical energy is converted into electric energy. We speak of dynamite, an explosive we resort to when obstacles are to be cleared out of our way to the goal. Granted! We need intellectual dynamite that shall free us from the thralldom of tentative formulations forced to do duty beyond their time. We need moral dynamic. We need the dynamo that shall transmute the dross of our common life into gold and silver and precious stones; we need—and by way of quiet thoughtfulness and reverent devotion we may find—the thing the apostle prays for—the *dunamis*, the personal power that shall give distinction to our every undertaking, that shall give us endurance in the face of trial, and courage when the odds may be arrayed against us; might, realizing itself in inward life, manifesting itself in heroic endeavor, and clothing itself in ultimate spiritual triumph.

XXI

WONDER AND WORSHIP

It was Thomas Carlyle who said that the man who cannot wonder, who does not habitually wonder (and worship), were he president of innumerable royal societies and carried the whole "Mechanique Celeste" and "Hegel's Philosophy" and the epitome of all laboratories and observatories, with their results, in his single head, is but a pair of spectacles behind which there is no eye. Plato's saying that "wonder is the beginning of philosophy" is the intangible fulcrum upon which many a bewildered student has tried to steady his philosophic lever.

There is, however, no instance in the Gospels where Jesus refers specifically to the feeling of wonder, although we find him expressing disappointment at the failure of the religious leaders of his time to recognize God's marvelous revelations of his goodness in the history of his chosen people, and pity at their blindness to the evidences of his creative energy and amazing providence in all the works of his hand. The sunset and the dawn, the lilies of the field, and the life of every human—all spoke to him of a Providence whose mercy is boundless and disclosed a wisdom whose purposes are beyond our ken.

We are not surprised, therefore, that a statement

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

should have come down to us among the words attributed to Jesus speaking of this emotion, well authenticated in other literature, while not contained in the New Testament. "Wonder at the things before you," is one of his sayings, appearing in the "Miscellanies" of Clement of Alexandria and confirmed by kindred statements attributed to him in the Gospel according to the Hebrews, in "The Traditions" of Matthias and in the "Sayings of Jesus" among the Oxyrhynchus Papers discovered in Egypt in recent times. We can well believe in the genuineness of the saying because of its agreement with the New Testament teaching and because it complements His ideas contained in the Gospels.

We are supposed to be a practical people on this continent. We wish to give a reason for the faith that is in us. We not only try to explain questions that confront us, but are in danger of explaining away some of the richer elements of our faith. We make short shrift of doctrinal formulations and reserve our plaudits for those who can do things and "put things over." But in our emphasis on social service we dare not ignore the mystic relationships where our social adventures shall find their dynamic and inspiration. In our appreciation of the Divine Immanence, we must not ignore the complementary conception of the transcendent Deity. In giving prominence to the pulpit and its utterances we cannot afford to relegate the communion table to an inconspicuous corner, literally or figuratively, for it

IN MAJOR KEY

speaks to us of the hidden manna and invites us to the inexhaustible fountains where alone our spiritual longings may be satisfied. In a day when the message of the still small voice is in danger of being drowned by the noise of our ecclesiastical machinery, we do well to remind ourselves of the soul's high quest for "God, freedom, and immortality." The eagerness of our analysis of "Christ and the sins of society" must not be allowed to dissipate the quietness and confidence wherein our strength lies. In coining new names for our mechanical inventions and shaping new formulæ for our scientific discoveries, we must not forget Him whose name is Wonderful and whose interpretation of life has taught us to look upon man as a holy temple and to regard nature as the living garment of the eternal.

"The lake,
The lonely peaks, the valleys, lily-lit,
Were synagogues. The simplest sights we met—
The sower flinging seed on loam and rock;
The darnel in the wheat; the mustard-tree
That hath its seed so little and its boughs
Wide-spreading; and the wandering sheep, and nets
Shot in the wimpled waters, drawing forth
Great fish and small: these and a hundred such,
Seen by us daily, never seen aright,
Were pictures for Him from the pages of life,
Teaching by parable."

The fact of the matter is that the universe, from the tiny blade to the mightiest star that swings within the orbit of our vision, is calculated to arouse this emotion of wonder within us. Tennyson is but re-

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

sponding to this aspect of nature when he reverently addresses the flower in the crannied wall:

“Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.”

What stirs his heart in the little flower, the Hebrew poet found and felt in the larger aspects of the world:

“The heavens declare the glory of God,
And the firmament sheweth his handiwork.”

What Archibald Lampman spoke of as the wonders of the world and life's innumerable harmonies were not lost on the great soul of Robert Browning. He moved about in this life in the spirit of a true worshiper and found that

“Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul.”

Each in his turn, poet, psalmist, and prophet, is striving to express in words the feeling of awe which clothes him in the face of the inscrutable laws of nature and the mystery of life, death, and the vast forever.

We may lay it down as a fact verified in the experience of the ages that our progress is determined by this element of wonder within us and the readiness of

IN MAJOR KEY

the response we make to its appeal. If wonder be the daughter of ignorance, it may, with proper nurture, become the parent of knowledge. Here is a child setting out on the winding trail of knowledge on his own account. What a glorious adventure! What long, long thoughts! What worlds not realized!

"God bless a little boy who goes to school,
His shiny primer hugged against his breast,
With cheeks scrubbed clean, and in his rounded eyes
A baby wonder of the strange new quest!"

The sun shines on his happy morning face, the birds singing to him, the flowers smiling at him, the curve in the road, the school beyond the hill crest, and the teacher clothed with robes of omniscience—all awaken within him a sense of mystery akin to reverence which the experience of the years cannot efface.

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky!"

The nightly star is but a symbol of all phenomena in a world of wonders, wakening the imagination and arousing interest in the unknown. The artist in his "Blowing Bubbles," Carroll in his "Alice in Wonderland" join with the author of the "Nursery Rhyme" and with all serious-minded persons in the endeavor to interpret for us the feeling of awe and mystery with which a child looks out upon the great world about him.

But our progress in knowledge and the experience

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

of the years does not lessen our sense of mystery. Each one of us confirms the finding of Ulysses:

"All experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untraveled world whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move."

Archimedes of Syracuse wonders at the laws that operate as he leaps into the cold bath in the morning, and his discovery of *specific gravity* is the result; Sir Isaac Newton ruminates as he observes the ripe apple falling to the ground, and the formulation of the law of *gravitation* follows; James Watt listens to the rattle of the kettle lid and proceeds to make the *power of steam* available for the world of industry and travel. Given centuries of progress, one might imagine that our sense of wonderment would vanish in the atmosphere of assured and proved results. Not so! "Do the Christian mysteries give you no trouble?" asked a friend of Sir David Brewster, the eminent scientific philosopher, as he lay on his bed of death sixty years ago. "No, why should they? We are surrounded by mysteries. My own being is a mystery. I cannot explain the relation of my soul to my body. Everybody believes much which he cannot understand. The Trinity and the Atonement are a great deep; so is eternity; so is Providence. It gives me no uneasiness that I cannot explain them. They are secret things that belong to God." Prof. C. Lovatt Evans, speaking recently at the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, declared that "since philosophy cannot arrive at an

IN MAJOR KEY

explanation of human understanding, the great mystery of the origin, nature, and purpose of life will always remain to tease, stimulate, or humiliate us." Prof. F. G. Donnan, Fellow of the Royal Society, declared: "The mystery of life will always remain. Science is not the death but the birth of mystery, awe, and reverence." Following the lead of seventy-seven-year-old Sir Oliver Lodge, scientists agreed in believing that, "although science may be able some day to explain most of the phenomena which constitute life, still the sum total of these phenomena will always be inexplicable."

As our field of knowledge widens, we become more profoundly impressed with the vastness of the area that still remains unsurveyed. Our progress is not from the wonder of the child to the assured knowledge of the mature mind. Rather does it pursue a course akin to that desired by the Christian poet:

"Let knowledge grow from more to more,
And more of reverence in us dwell."

Who has witnessed the strong man in action without a feeling of admiration? It may be on the race track as his lithe body glides swiftly through space; it may be with his hand upon the throttle as he brings his precious human freight across a continent. In either case he reveals power, adaptation, and skill that challenge our admiration beyond anything that nature, inanimate or animate, can produce. The wonders of the human body are surpassed only by those of the

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

mind and spirit it enshrines. No one can define that elusive and distinctive and severely individual entity we call personality. It has no double. It is beyond our power of analysis. It is the wonderland whose features no psychology can portray, the *terra incognita* whose precincts no science can invade. Man remains for us the culmination of the creative process. "God's highest thought, God's deepest emotion," says Dr. W. J. Dawson, that poet and litterateur whose recent death we deplore, "are expressed in man. When a man is finished at last in the likeness of Christ, God's sense of beauty is satisfied in him, God's art has found its highest expression, and the beauty of God does rest upon him. The true Christian is God's poem in a world of prose; God's beauty in a world of gloom; God's fine and finished art in a world where men forget beauty and are careless of moral symmetry and spiritual grace."

But however greatly we may be impressed with the beauty and wonder of the world and of the life of man, we must move forward and upward in our recognition that the Creator himself is more wonderful than his creation. From the beginning God has been making himself known to men by law, prophecy, and gospel, according to their ability to receive him. Moses and Isaiah are but typical names of those who were instruments in translating for us the truth of God in terms of law and prophecy. It is when we contemplate the gospel of redeeming mercy that we find ourselves overwhelmed by the thought of how far

IN MAJOR KEY

God can go in his purpose to give to man deliverance from the bondage and power of sin and to disengage the vital energies of his soul. Can he become one of us? Is his nature love? If so, is it possible for him not to become one of us? Will the shepherd go in search of the lost sheep? Will the father yearn for a lost son? Will a man lay down his life for a friend? Is there any limit to the sacrifice that love will make in the quest for its object? These questions find an answer in the nature of God and the all-sufficient unveiling of himself which he has made.

"Here is a mystic sky filled with divine truth, the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of infinite wisdom, the bounties of divine beneficence, the beauties of absolute holiness, the marvels of redeeming love, the riches of the godhead, the glories of Father, Son, and Spirit, shining far more brightly than the sun at noonday."

We detect the voice of our Father in the accents of Jesus. Have we exhausted or outgrown the meaning of the incarnation? Can we still affirm that "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness—God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory"? The final answer to the soul's questionings is to be found only as we gaze with adoration in the face of Jesus Christ. "When I consider him," says Channing, the Unitarian divine, "not only as possessed with the consciousness of an unexampled and un-

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

bounded majesty, but as recognizing a kindred nature in human beings, and living and dying to raise them to a participation of his divine glories; and when I see him under these views allying himself to men by the tenderest ties, embracing them with a spirit of humanity which no insult, injury, or pain could for a moment repel or overpower, I am filled with wonder as well as reverence and love."

We admire his teaching and applaud his mighty works, we are awed by the power of his insight, but in the presence of his redeeming love and voluntary sacrifice we fall down and worship. Here we have but faith, we cannot know. Here we touch the borders of a mystery the angels desire to look into. Here within the field of our humanity we see God's love, that from all eternity refuses to be outmatched by the devices of evil and that is willing to go out to the farthest limit in reclaiming the object of its quest. "O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

There is a *beyond* to every hill crest. What we can see but cannot see over is as good as infinite. We thought we were at rock bottom when we struck the atom. But now we wonder what may be beyond the protons and electrons as they leap and move about in hundreds within the spacious compass of an atom. When the most powerful telescope shows us the farthest known star, we say, "What is beyond it?" We can hear and overhear a great deal, but there is a world

IN MAJOR KEY

of sound both higher and lower than we can detect. After we have admiringly considered the achievements of science, philosophy, and religion through the long centuries, we still wonder what limitless worlds of reality, truth, and beauty may be yet waiting to be known and discovered. Herbert Spencer is said to have expressed a desire for two more years of life: "There seemed to be Some one just beyond the bounds of the known whom he would like to know."

We consider the great world of nature and our relationship to it and stand amazed,

"Hearing oftentimes

The still sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

As we ponder our inestimable gift of life and the apparently limitless possibilities contained within it, we are forced to exclaim:

"What a piece of work is a man!
How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty!
In form and moving how express and admirable!
In action how like an angel!
In apprehension how like a god!"

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

We reflect upon the divine love in its sacrificial and redeeming outreachings until at last we come face to face with the world's greatest mystery and the heart's most enduring satisfaction:

“When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.”

In the light of facts like these, no life can be regarded as commonplace, no preaching can afford to be ordinary, and no divine service can be “usual” or fail to solemnize, quicken, and inspire.

XXII

WHEN THE MORNING STARS SANG TOGETHER

THE day is too short when decisive battles are to be fought. The military strategist could hardly understand the oracular utterance of a transcendentalist like Thomas Carlyle, "There is no time or space." Time and space are very real to him, and success or failure may be a matter of a few minutes more or less. Donald Hankey says it was a matter of seconds. Wellington at Waterloo prayed for reënforcements or nightfall. Joshua pleads for more time and a fair field to finish what he began. He is a soldier, bold, resourceful, intense. *Der Tag* has come. He is exalted and inspired. "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon," he cried, "and thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the nation had avenged themselves of their enemies." The moral order of the universe is with the man who espouses a righteous cause. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera, and the sun and moon are no less dependable allies in the vindication of Israel's cause.

But let it be put down in cold print and asserted with the literalism of a historic event that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and it instantly

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

obeyed. We at once make Joshua greater than his Creator and give him the power to halt the orderly movement of the universe. God realizes his purposes in harmony with what Antigone called "the eternal laws of heaven." In his governance there is no caprice. His laws are a part of himself. He is not imprisoned within them. Neither is he God without them. But let a man be given authority to reverse or suspend these laws, the universe is thrown into confusion and our faith in a morally ordered world goes by the board. Belief in an order of nature is inseparable from belief in God. "Two things which Christian theology recognizes as two aspects of the same sublime reality, personal faith in the righteous God and the clear perception of the moral order of the world."

The fact of the matter is that (like Wolfe before the battle of the Plains of Abraham) Joshua is quoting poetry when he exclaims:

"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon,
And thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon."

He is quoting from "The Book of the Upright," a very old book long since lost to the world of Hebrew literature, and the further statement that "the sun stayed in the midst of heaven and hasted not to go down about a whole day" is not a remark of Joshua's at all, but the commentary of a pious, unimaginative soul whose loyalty to Israel was greater than his appreciation of law and whose zeal for the welfare of his people was greater than his love of poetry.

IN MAJOR KEY

The story of creation may be viewed in a similar light. What Matthew Arnold calls the "Grand Style" is seen here at its best. There is a plot gradually unfolding and climax reached when man appears and God breathes into his nostrils the breath of life. The object of the sacred writer is palpably not to teach cosmogony, but to maintain interests that are religious and moral and to establish man's unique position in the general scheme of things.

"From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
The universal fame began,
The diapason ending full in man."

He is "different"; he is, as the Apostle Paul puts it (1 Cor. 3: 9), God's "poem," and the whole scaffolding of the story with its pictorial sketches drawn with literary and poetic power will have served its purpose when man, a living, breathing, thinking being, enters upon the stage.

"From Thee, great God, we spring; to Thee we tend;
Path, Motive, Guide, Original, and End."

This general position may be established, whichever one of the three accounts of creation we examine. They differ in order of development and in some of the details, but agree in the main principle of recognizing the creative hand of God and in making man's appearance the climax of the poem. There is here the evident coloring of the imagination and what Wordsworth speaks of as "the language of men in a state of vivid sensation." When we lose the poetic sense, and imagination is forced to make way for pure reason, we

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

do violence to the spirit of the scene and to the intention of the writer. He does not claim to be writing history or science, although the cosmogony of his time may be involved in what he says. The world of which he speaks had been in existence millions of years before the art of writing had been guessed at or the thought of making history or formulating a scientific scheme of the universe had ever entered the mind of man. To set the findings of science in antithesis to the affirmations of revelation is to do violence to science and revelation at one and the same time.

"The work of creation," we were taught, "is God's making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good." The statement is chaste and reverent, but, as it stands, untouched by the imagination which created the text upon which it is founded, it is prose, severe and unrelieved. Contrast this rendering with the original record:

"And God said, Let us make man
In our image, after our likeness:
And let them have dominion
Over the fish of the sea,
And over the birds of the heavens,
And over the cattle, and over all the earth,
And over every creeping thing
That creepeth upon the earth."

(Gen. 1: 26.)

The one statement is terse and unadorned, making its appeal to the intellect; the other is concrete and moving, making its appeal to the imagination.

IN MAJOR KEY

The second is the more vivid and picturesque account:

“And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. . . . And Jehovah God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it.” (Gen. 2: 7, 15.)

Is there no poetry there? It is apparent in the complexion of the thought, in the rhythm which even a translation betrays, and in the evident movement of the language used. In either one of the two accounts we can detect the aroma of pure poetry.

But let us look at the third account:

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?
For thou hast made him but little lower than God,
And crownest him with glory and honor.
Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;
Thou hast put all things under his feet:
All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field,
The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.”

(Ps. 8: 3-9.)

This is poetry admittedly, but differing in no essential feature from the two narratives of Genesis. The similarity of phrase is more than a mere coincidence. The content of the thought is the same. The whole spirit and atmosphere of the three different renderings is permeated by the flavor and perfume of Hebrew poetry, and much misunderstanding has

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

arisen in the minds of devout people because they have been led to read in terms of prose what cannot be appreciated except in the light of a vivid and active imagination which transports the reader into an ideal region where the inward eye may see a light that never was on sea or land, where the inward ear may catch the accents of a divine symphony, and in the power of a living faith which finds the true harmony to which the human heart aspires within the blue-vaulted cathedral of immensity,

“When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy.”

The poetic sense is necessary in giving a reasonable interpretation of whole areas of Scripture. The best commentary on Job is not Matthew Henry or “Driver’s Introduction,” but the poems of George Macdonald, where we realize that “man’s misery is the wind of the waving garments of him that walks in the garden in the cool of the day. All misery is God *unknown*.” Or Shakespeare’s plays, where theme, plot, and character all point toward an inescapable goal—the final overthrow of evil and the ultimate vindication of the good. One has but to think of “Hamlet” or “The Merchant of Venice” to see that in the realm of dramatic poetry rather than in the region of historical events the true significance of this perhaps the greatest book of all literature is to be found.

The message of Jonah is in danger of being lost in the logomachies of unreflective minds and in vain dis-

IN MAJOR KEY

sertations on whales with large mouths and phenomenal bellies. To seek light in this direction is to degrade a mighty prophetic utterance to the plane of a visionless quest, where the forest is lost in the trees and the message in the words. The New Testament parable of the Elder Brother is but the personalizing of "the burden" of the book of Jonah, and the endeavor to bring home the message of this great missionary book to the hearts of a people who seem to have been incapable of realizing that special privileges carry with them the obligation to share them with other members of the Father's family. To say the one is allegory and the other parable is but to affirm that prose and direct narration is not the only or chief medium through which spiritual communications may be given to the world. It is significant that while the few are able to follow the thought of the Sermon on the Mount, sustained and sublime as it all is, the many turn to the parables, the concrete poetic renderings of the lofty idealism of the Sermon. The same human instincts draw us again and again to the Book of Psalms in preference to the historical and even the great prophetic writings.

Theology has its clearly defined compartments for the bodies and the souls of men—Hell where failure is written across the very countenance of the love of God, Purgatory where the flames of a restorative justice are calculated to cleanse the human spirit of its impurities, and Heaven where dwell the saints who have washed their robes and made them white.

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

Theology has its recognized place. A virile people will always seek a consistent, intellectual articulation of the faith that is in them. Error must be faced by truth clearly and vigorously stated. But the most suggestive commentaries on this tripartite scheme of the spiritual world are to be found not in the "Summa Theologiæ" of Thomas Aquinas or "The Institutes" of John Calvin, but in Dante's "Divine Comedy" and Milton's "Paradise Lost." Great preachers like Newman and Whyte turned instinctively to these and other poets for inspiration and perspective in putting forth their most telling religious messages. Truths which become a stumbling-block when presented in the form of dogma may be of abiding interest and worth when enshrined in the forms appropriate to poetic feeling and fervor.

"What is purgatory? A place of punishment in the other life where some souls suffer for a time before they come to go to heaven." This is surely the voice of theological dogma, specific in terms and naïve in statement. If it fails to carry conviction, it is not for want of definiteness. Indeed, we seek relief from its extreme definiteness by turning to the poet with his more delicate touch that he may cast the benign light of his poetic genius upon the question. Let Dante be heard:

"And of the second Kingdom will I sing,
Wherein the human spirit doth purge itself,
And to ascend to heaven becometh worthy.
But let dead Poesy here rise again,

IN MAJOR KEY

O holy Muses, since that I am yours,
And here Calliope somewhat ascend,
My song accompanying with that sound,
Of which the miserable magpies felt
The blow so great that they despaired of pardon."

The spirit of "dead poesy" is resurrected and abroad in this utterance, "Calliope" and other "holy Muses" are invoked, and an immortal "song" is raised transmuting the dross of ordinary dogmatic prose into the gold of pure poetry. True, at the background of Dante's immortal works is the theology of his time, but under the touch of his creative genius *Purgatoria* is no longer the dogmatic teaching of the Curia, but the spiritual interpretation of the experience of every human soul. Heaven and hell are not to be transferred to an indefinite future. To him who knows the anguish of the human heart, purgatory is not "a place" of future torment but a condition under which sinning human beings live here and now. The mind is its own place and of itself can make a heaven of hell and a hell of heaven. The spirit of Dante's "Divine Comedy" interprets for us human failures, moral aspirations, and spiritual triumphs in the realm of time and space.

Here is the voice of theology speaking in prose, crisp, clear-cut, and succinct: "When God created man he entered into a covenant of life with him upon condition of perfect obedience, forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil upon pain of death." The force and ethical content of a state-

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

ment like this is lost unless the poetic character of the original accounts is kept clearly in mind, and it was left to the great Puritan poet to restore the poetic atmosphere which the Westminster divines, in their zeal for abstract statement, had failed to appreciate. Let him with "a voice whose sound was like the sea" be heard:

"Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, heavenly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning how the heavens and the earth
Rose out of chaos; or, if Sion hill
Delight thee more, or Siloa's brook that flowed
Fast by the cradle of God, I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventrous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme."

Here again the theology of the Reformation forms the background of the epic. But it is as a poet and not as a theologian Milton is able to transport himself to the realm where the spirit of God is creatively present—

"And with mighty wings outspread
Dovelike sat'st brooding on the vast abyss
And madest it pregnant."

What Dante did for the theology of the Middle

IN MAJOR KEY

Ages, Milton did for the theology of the seventeenth century; he recovered the original poetic significance of the dogmatic teaching of his day, founded upon an all too literal interpretation of certain portions of Scripture. Every act of disobedience is a fall, every forward step is fraught with danger and possible tragedy, and yet the step may be the condition of moral discovery and spiritual elevation.

The doctrine of the incarnation is common to most of the creeds of Christendom, and it is reassuring to observe how little difference there is in all the essentials of Christian doctrine between, let us say, the "Shorter Catechism" of Presbyterian theology, the "Thirty-Nine Articles" of Anglican theology, and "Butler's Catechism" of the Church of Rome. The doctrine of the incarnation is at the heart of all three formularies, and yet in the interest of conciseness of statement, something of beauty and suggestiveness had to be sacrificed. The hints, suggestions, and poetic kinship of words often mean more to us than the words themselves. In this fundamental Christian doctrine prose and poetry are transcended in one sublime and spiritual conception. Yet there are those of vigorous intellect and active imaginative faculty who find more satisfaction in Robert Browning's rendering of this divine mystery than in all the matter-of-fact dogmatic statements concerning it taken together:

"As thy love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

He who did most shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! My flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever; a Hand like my hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ
stand."

It is submitted, therefore, that poetry may frequently be a truer interpretation of life and religious experience than any formally enunciated doctrinal statement; that in the exposition of Scripture as well as in the presentation of Christian truth the imagination must be given a larger place; that many of our theological troubles arise from the futile attempt to force spiritual ideas intended to move upon a poetic plane into the unyielding thought-forms of metaphysical speculation. The poets, true to their name, are the real makers and creators of ideas; dogma at the best is but what Plato calls "the shadow of images" that pass to and fro upon the highway of religious experience. The appeal which the ornate makes to the religious instincts of many earnest Christians in their service of public worship is an implicit admission that where words and dogmas fail, imagination and symbol may succeed. The poets are the preachers' best friends. They keep him in vital contact with nature and life. When theology becomes fixed—and the tendency is in this direction—the life it is intended to conserve is in danger. Victor Hugo was a true son of the Church of his fathers, too true to be silent when

IN MAJOR KEY

danger threatened. He contended that the institution which came into being in response to religious need may be the undoing of the very spirit it was intended to embody. The message of Antonio Fogazzaro's *Saint* points in the same direction. This is a warning to the Church and to the theologically-minded of every age, lest in their zeal for definition they lose contact with the reality it was their intention to define; lest in their enthusiasm for correct doctrinal statement they destroy the life which the doctrine presupposes; lest in their loyalty to the outward institution they do violence to the spirit it was meant to enshrine.

When I was a small boy I undertook to make a cage for a humming-bird which was unfortunate enough to get caught. The cage was as well made as the tools and materials available would warrant, and my tiny, restless captive was tenderly and lovingly placed within its confines. But to my great distress the bird died before the morning broke. It was intended to live not in a cage, but in God's out-of-doors, where it might share to the full the freedom of the open air and the sweetness of the flowers when the dew is wet upon them. Even so, the cultivation of the poetic sense and the freedom and elasticity of a poetic atmosphere is the best corrective to the dangers inherent in the cage of theological formulation. It lets in light and fragrance from the world of human experience where, to use Father Tyrrell's phrase, "the faith of the collectivity," in daily contact with living reality, is alone the ultimate standard of truth.

XXIII

THE ROSE OF THE PLAIN

"Ere the Robin paints his breast,
Ere the Daffodil is dressed,
Ere the Iris' lovely head
Waves above her perfumed bed,
Comes the Crocus—and the Spring
Follows after, wing on wing!"

—*Isabel Ecclestone Mackay.*

"The trees to their innermost marrow
Are touched by the sun;
The robin is here and the sparrow;
Spring is begun."

—*Archibald Lampman.*

"He sings for love of the season,
When the days grow warm and long,
For the beautiful God-sent reason
That his breast was born for song."

—*E. Pauline Johnson.*

How cold and bare the countryside has been during the last few months! Everything lay in the grip of the giant frost. Root and branch, bluff and blade, field and flower were all held in the rigidity and paleness of death. But God's recurring miracle is upon us. The buds are already swelling. Their autumn preparation was not without purpose. The sap is coursing its way through its ancient channels. The birds are already tuning.

IN MAJOR KEY

"There is a day in Spring
When under all the earth the secret germs
Begin to stir and glow before they bud.
The wealth and pomp of midsummer
Lie in the heart of that inglorious hour
Which no man names with blessing though its work
Is blessed by all the world. Such days there are
In the slow story of the growth of souls."

A mother was in church with her little boy on Easter Sunday morning. She remarked on the helpful character of the service. He also enjoyed it, but his ears had just then caught the chorus of the birds already twittering in the bare branches, and he added cheerily: "But I like the service of the birds too." We all do, and rejoice in the promise of re-awakened life and the return of the sounds and scenes of another glorious summer. May we all join in the chorus of the Song of Solomon to-day:

"The winter is past,
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
The voice of the dove is heard in our land;
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

The rose of our great Canadian plain is the prairie anemone, which will carpet our far-extending acres in the course of the next few weeks with all of beauty and delicacy that the heart could wish. The modesty of its apparel, the softness of its woolly surface, the touch of color that it gives to an otherwise forbidding scene, are but a suggestion of the wonderful variety and resourcefulness of the spirit and life that are

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

throbbing within the great world of which we form a part.

Nature believes in variety. Our different moods have their counterpart in the varying aspects of the earth's surface. How tiresome were the earth all prairie or all mountain or all valley! We have a fair share of each in Canada. We have valleys all the way from the Annapolis to the Okanagan, mountains all the way from Blomidon to the Rockies, and between, the great plains of the Middle West. Anyone who tires of the mountains may descend to the plains; anyone upon whom the monotony of the plains may pall can betake himself to the valleys; dwellers in the valley may enjoy the openness of the plain and sometimes the bracing air of the mountain slopes. Ample provision for every taste and every mood!

The dreamer takes to the mountains. There he beholds the land of promise. There he claims to see reality face to face. Something of the radiance of his countenance may be communicated to us. Moses received the law on Sinai's Mount, and the chosen people were guided by it for a thousand years. There the prophet hearkened to the voice of God that he might communicate a message to his fellows. There Jesus was transfigured in the presence of his close friends when his countenance did shine as the light.

Deprive us of the mountain experience, and we lose our inspiration. Have you ever realized the presence of God in an intimate way? That means being on the mountain. Can you recall your youthful decision to

IN MAJOR KEY

live the Christian life? That was a mountain experience. Do you remember your first communion when God as a personal friend drew near to you? That means having been on the heights. But these experiences are exceptional. True, but the world without them would not be what it is. They speak of faith in the unseen, the spirituality of life, and the promise of a better day. We do well, therefore, to cultivate the summits. The hills have something to teach us. Wordsworth's shepherd has something to say to us:

"Love had he found in huts where poor men lie,
His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

But we do not live in the mountains. We dream our dreams and see our visions there. To live, we come down to the plains. Here we build our homes and carry on the business of daily life. The poet gets his inspiration on the mountain top, but comes down to the level to share with his fellows the glory of his vision. The prophet receives his code of laws there, but descends that he may translate the same in terms of social needs. Jesus was transfigured in the mountain, but he came down to the plain to minister to a sick lad. To stay upon the mountain is to become visionary and to leave the people to their own idolatrous tendencies. To remain aloft is to fail to hear the still, sad music of humanity. The prophet must write the vision and make it plain that he may run that reads it. The disciples must be taught, but the

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

epileptic must be healed. On the plains where we toil and struggle there is danger of dullness and monotony. Life is ever in danger of becoming routine. In the affairs of the world there is a lull just now. We have had enough of the stimulation and romance of war. But the prose of life must not be allowed to dominate. The poetry and rhythm of it can be maintained by finding access to the sources of happiness on the plain.

Jesus Christ is the rose of our plain. The rose stands for love, and where love is there is happiness. The rose is for the shepherd and his clan. Religion and love make our otherwise common life a garden. In the light of the rose the irksome duty becomes a pleasure. In the presence of love our humblest service becomes a ministry of grace. Jesus is a constant companion and is available for all. There are some roses we may not know and some we cannot afford to buy. But the rose of the plain is for you and me. The shepherd decks himself with it. The Shulamite maid adorns her brow with it. She prefers it, with the love of her highland shepherd, to all the luxuries of Solomon's court. The rose of the plain or the crown of a queen—that was her choice. The love of common life or the toy of an Oriental monarch. Give me the prairie anemone, pure and sweet, and I care not who may luxuriate in American Beauty roses.

We are not always on the plains. We descend with bowed heads to the valley. There are shadows that betray us in the valley. We are lonely, and the heart

IN MAJOR KEY

is empty. The freshets come, and we are overwhelmed. The spirit of questioning haunts us. Is there any comfort available in the valley? God reveals his presence upon the mountain. He sustains and strengthens us on the plains. Yes, and in the valley he is our Shepherd and Guide.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;
Thy staff and thy rod, they comfort me."

There is no road we cannot travel if Jesus be by our side. When our faith needs reënforcement, he takes us up to some high mountain, where a reassuring voice speaks to us out of the clouds. When we are weary with the ever-recurring duties of life, he draws near and says: "I am the rose of the plain. My love shall lighten your burden." When we are lonely in life's valley, he comes to us and says: "I am the lily of the valley. My spirit of self-forgetfulness will enable you to consecrate your sorrow in your devotion to the welfare of others." The purity and sweetness of the lily have in them the promise of endurance and of our final triumph in the ordeal of the valley.

Now "I understand why Thy roses have been red, not white. I understand why drops of blood have strewn life's garden. I understand why my will has so often been thwarted, why my schemes have so often miscarried, why my road has so often been interrupted. It is because Thy land of Canaan is a land of Sacrifice and I am prepared for that Sacrifice. It is

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

because the rose of Thy heaven is the passion-flower of Calvary."

Whatever helps us to realize our dependence on God is finally a gain. There is promise in this cry of our human weakness:

"Hold thou my hand, so weak I am and helpless;
I dare not take one step without thine aid;
Hold thou my hand, for then, O loving Saviour,
No dread of ill can make my soul afraid."

Let us ever keep in mind the loving Saviour whose beauty of holiness irradiates life. With him as our companion, the steep ascent becomes the promise of a transfigured life; every forced march through the wilderness, the assurance of a promised land; and every tear in the valley becomes a jewel in an imperishable crown. With his spirit of hope and love and self-forgetfulness every mountain becomes a Pisgah, every plain a land of Beulah, and every valley of Baca a place of springs.

XXIV

THE QUEST

THE feeling of "something beyond" that led Terah to move out from the land of Chaldee and induced his illustrious son to join and continue in his father's quest has in it abiding religious value. It brought Abram to the place of Shechem and the oak of Moreh, and prompted him to set up an altar there; it led him to plead for the men of Sodom: "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord who am but dust and ashes." This feeling is the final argument in the matter of our faith in the Ineffable. Man's consciousness of the being of God, his experience of him, leading him here to make new departures, there to set up a place of worship and elsewhere to prostrate himself in dust and ashes, is evidence so substantial that no rationalist can gainsay it.

I

God is not the final link in a chain of reasoning. Before man was, he is. He is the first figure in our human alphabet, the last syllable in every intelligent utterance, and the unity of our thinking processes is but the shadow of his thought.

God was never more real to me than when I knelt by a fallen tree in the solitude of the deep woods of a June day, by my father's side. The latter is looking, it

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

may be, for a piece of wood of a particular size and shape, but there is a deeper quest in his soul in pursuance of which we engage in the fundamental act of worship. The play of ever-varying light upon the ground; the evidences of an abounding life which he and I shared in common with all growing things; the mere stirring of a withered leaf disturbed by the necessities of an expanding life beneath it; the upward appeal of the maple, tall and straight overhead, and the impressiveness of the silence and the shadows—all induced an attitude of devotion which prompted the extemporized altar and the intimate prayer. In the light of experiences like these, one can catch something of the spirit of Bliss Carman's "Vestigia"¹:

"I took a day to search for God,
And found Him not. But as I trod
By rocky ledge through woods untamed,
Just where one scarlet lily flamed,
I saw His footprint in the sod.

Then suddenly, all unaware,
Far off in the deep shadows where
A solitary hermit thrush
Sang through the holy twilight hush—
I heard His voice upon the air.

At last with evening as I turned
Homeward, and thought what I had learned
And all that there was still to probe—
I caught the glory of His robe
Where the last fires of sunset burned."

¹From "Later Poems," published by McClelland and Stewart. Used by permission.

IN MAJOR KEY

II

Here is an account of a Western cowboy who carried in his bosom the grace to become aware of a dread Power he could neither describe nor analyze. He is enveloped within it as in a prairie fire. The more he tries to escape from it, the more inextricably he becomes enmeshed in the overpowering reality of its presence.

Two days ago he was riding back alone, in the afternoon, from an unsuccessful search after strayed horses, and suddenly, all in the lifting of a hoof, the weird prairie had gleamed into eerie life, had dropped the veil and spoken to him; while the breeze stopped and the sun stood still for a flash in waiting for his answer. And he, his heart in a grip of ice, the frozen flesh a-crawl with terror upon his loosened bones, white-lipped and wide-eyed with frantic fear, uttered a yell of horror as he dashed the spurs into his panic-stricken horse, in a mad endeavor to escape from the Awful Presence that filled all earth and sky from edge to edge of vision.

The attempt to banish God from the scenes of earth and time may be prompted by a truly religious conception. But he was here before the conception and the attempt, unsuccessful as it must ever be, was made possible by his radiance. Browning's "Cleon" speaks of him as dwelling

"Within the eventual element of calm."

Calmness is an element of his being, and the silence that is in the starry sky and the sleep that is among the lonely hills have their contribution to make toward the ministry of the human soul. But he is to be apprehended, not alone in realms transcending our earthly

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

experience, but in the midst of scenes here and now which the consciousness of his presence illumines and the thought of his nearness transfigures. Henry van Dyke is seeking but to make God real and to bring him near as he offers his devout prayer to "The God of the Open Air":

"Thou who hast set Thy dwelling fair
With flowers beneath, above with starry light
And set Thy altars everywhere,
On mountain height,
In woodland valleys dim with many a dream,
In valleys bright with springs,
And in the curving capes of every stream;
Thou who hast taken to Thyself the wings
Of morning to abide
Upon the secret places of the sea
And on fair islands where the tide
Visits the beauty of untrodden shores,
Waiting for worshipers to come to Thee
In Thy great out-of-doors—
To Thee I turn, to Thee I make my prayer,
God of the open air!"

III

Every man who remains true to the religious instinct, which is but his nature's affirmation of the spirituality of the world, knows something of an inward yearning that may be voiceless and the upward reaching that seeks fellowship with "the eternal not ourselves." Standing by the shores of the Pacific with a vast continent behind us; a mighty throbbing ocean, losing itself in a limitless expanse of green, before us; and the intoxication of the ozone of the air around and

IN MAJOR KEY

above us, we cannot fail to realize something of the divinity which earth and sea and sky but half conceal and half reveal.

"Like tides on a crescent sea-beach
When the moon is new and thin,
Into our hearts high yearnings
Come welling and surging in:

Come from the mystic ocean,
Whose rim no foot has trod;
Some of us call it longing,
And others call it God."

The spirit we find in nature is not other than the spirit that prefers

"Before all temples the upright heart and pure."

If man has the keenness of intuition to recognize the footprints of God in the sod and the clearness of vision to catch the glory of his robe at sunset, there must be in him as well, and in him particularly, something of the beauty and truth of the divine.

"Back to the world with quickening start
I looked and longed for any part
In making saving Beauty be,
And from that kindling ecstasy
I knew God dwelt within my heart."

IV

To find God within one's own heart is to learn the secret of his presence in rocky ledge and holy twilight. Dr. Francis Peabody, of Harvard, speaks of St. Gertrude of Eisleben, who passed her entire life from

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

five years of age in a convent where she was permitted to see many visions of the Saviour. When another suppliant asked where Christ might be found, the Saviour answered: "Either on the altar or in the heart of Gertrude."

How far can we verify in our seasons of communion the truth and comfort of the presence of Christ in the hearts of his followers? Those things which we can see and handle amidst the solemnities of the sacramental service are at the best but the outward and visible signs of a unity of life, human and divine, past and present, which must be realized primarily in our own hearts.

The theologians have done their best and are deserving of greater recognition than we ordinarily accord them, but when it comes to the matter of God and his whereabouts, the poets may answer first of all and best of all the questionings of the human soul.

"Where is God?

In the hush of evening's gloaming,
In the roar of breakers foaming,
In the mountain summits, doming,
God is there!

Where is God?

In the sunset fires, burning,
In the glow of day returning,
In the silence and the yearning,
God is there!

Where is God?

In the winds the forest rending,
In the skies above us bending,
In earth's paths toward heaven tending,
God is there!

IN MAJOR KEY

Where is God?
In the temple sweet and holy,
In the paths of meek and lowly,
In the hearts that trust Him solely,
God is there!"

V

It looks at times as though our worthiest aspirations would prove abortive. Promise and fulfillment are at cross purposes. Our little ship is in sore straits, for wind and wave are in conspiracy against us. Nature speaks to us of a throbbing life, and our hearts are glad, but only for a season, for the grass withers and the flowers fall and the hopes that were inspired by the glory of a summer's day are dashed by the ruthlessness of an autumnal frost. Who has not been wakened to a sense of the beauty of life by an "awful rose of dawn," and inspired by the prospects of a fair and fruitful day only to find that the sun is gone down upon our dearest hopes before they found full form or substance. What came to us in the fashion of permanent spiritual enrichment remains as but the memory of

"The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever looked with human eyes."

The voices of the morning lured us, the emptiness of the noonday mocks us; we were elated by the anticipations of youth; we are chastened by the mediocrity of our achievements in the midst of the years. The mirage may, indeed, be the image of objects that are real and substantial somewhere, but, as for us, its

THE CHORUS OF LIFE

tantalizing light led us not to a pool of welcome refreshment, but to a weary waste of disillusionment.

The lines inscribed on the memorial tablet to Francis Thompson at the University of Manchester are taken from the poet's "Ode to the Setting Sun" and interpret this mood:

"Whatso looks lovelily
Is but the rainbow on life's weeping rain.
Why have we longings of immortal pain
And all we long for mortal? Woe is me,
And all our chants but chaplet some decay,
And mine this vanishing—nay, vanished day."

But the poignancy of our disappointment may be traced to the earth-born quality of our thought. Too often we test our achievements by the transitoriness of the summer flowers and are impatient with the ripening processes of the years. We would praise a fair day at noon; men of wisdom do so at night. We allow the depression incident to the "weeping rain" to obscure our vision, and are thus unable to see the divinely certified promise of the rainbow. Contrary winds may put us to the test, but it is the storm that works toughness into the trees and gianthood into men. May it not be that the shame of immediate failure carries in its bosom the earnest of fulfillment in a wider setting?

"The restless throbbings and burnings
That hope unsatisfied brings;
The weary longings and yearnings
For the mystical better things,"

are in themselves tangible tokens that the mirage shall

IN MAJOR KEY

become a pool, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose; that our frustrations here are but a triumph's evidence of the fullness of the days; that the morning's promise shall be answered by the glory of the noonday; that the secret whisperings of the springtime shall be openly proclaimed in the songs of an abundant harvest; that He who made us to hope will not leave us in the end to sigh; that our compensation for our failures in time and our quest for the love we have lost shall be interpreted by the triumphs of the soul in its widening, deepening fellowship, when the spirit that denies shall be finally discredited, and eternity affirms the conception of an hour. There shall never be one lost good. The human quest shall come to its own in the land of heart's desire.

"It must be so—Plato, thou reasonest well!
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality?
Or whence this secret dread of inward horror,
Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul
Back on himself, and startles at destruction?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;
'Tis heaven itself that points out a hereafter
And intimates eternity to man.
Eternity! thou pleasing, dreadful thought!"

Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries



1 1012 01236 4727

